

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

End the occupation of Iraq
**MARCH THIS
SATURDAY, 27 SEPT**
12 noon, Hyde Park, London

THE BATTLE IN THE POST OFFICE pages 9 and 12

THE WAR AND LABOUR'S CONFERENCE page 5

PLUS

EIGHT-PAGE DEMONSTRATION SUPPLEMENT

THIS IS IMPERIALISM

GET THE TROOPS OUT!

IN BRIEF

Deepcut a 'cover-up'

"HOW CAN they ignore us any longer? All we want is the truth, justice and change."

So said Geoff and Diane Gray, speaking at a Socialist Alliance meeting in Hackney, east London, on Monday of this week.

Geoff and Diane are campaigning for justice following the death of their 17 year old son, Private Geoff Gray, in suspicious circumstances at the notorious Deepcut barracks.

They were speaking just days after a Surrey police investigation into the deaths of four soldiers at the barracks found "significant gaps in the care" of young men and women in the army.

Despite this the investigation declared there was no evidence of foul play and there will be no prosecutions.

The soldiers' families denounced the investigation as a "cover-up" and are demanding a full inquest.

"This is not a Geoff Gray problem. It's a British army problem," said Geoff's father. "This must never happen again."

No fall in poverty

NEW LABOUR is failing to meet its own anti-poverty targets.

The government's own report Opportunity for All shows that it is still not on target to cut the number of children living in poverty by 2004.

Since 1996-7 there has also been no change in the proportion of working age adults living in relative poverty.

Neither has the proportion of children, pensioners or other adults living in persistent poverty dropped.

'Advice deserts'

THE GOVERNMENT'S new system of legal aid is in crisis and is hitting many of the poorest people.

So warned the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) this week. It said that many lawyers have abandoned legal aid work in favour of private work, leaving many with no access to legal aid.

David Harker, the CAB's chief executive, says that "advice deserts" have developed in parts of England and Wales.

For example, in Kent there is no legally aided housing advice and in Leatherhead in Surrey there are no legal aid lawyers.

Beds slashed

PEOPLE WITH mental health problems face deteriorating services and huge hospital bed cuts.

NHS trusts are slashing bed numbers because they have huge deficits, mental health charities have warned.

Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust in north London, for example, is planning to cut beds because it is facing a £2 million deficit. Management says this creates an "opportunity to reduce nursing establishments and so generate savings".

Paul Corry of the charity Rethink says the government promised an extra £1 billion, "but that got reduced to a mere pittance for the frontline staff."

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Labour is bad for your health, warns Dobson

"I WISH it was not necessary to be warning people about a Labour government with policies that are a threat to the NHS."

That statement came from a former Labour cabinet minister on the eve of the party's conference.

Frank Dobson, Blair's first minister for health, launched a blistering attack on the government's key health policies, speaking in Sunderland on Monday of this week.

He attacked the Labour government for "reintroducing competition" into the NHS.

And he slammed the government's plans for privately run diagnostic and treatment centres and for foundation hospitals.

"What is proposed is disastrous for the NHS and disastrous for the Labour Party," he said.

The government wants 51 diagnostic



Frank Dobson

and treatment centres that will be built and run by the private sector and will rush through operations.

They have rightly been dubbed "surgical factories".

Dobson said, "The government is dishing out franchises to the private sector. They are going to be allowed to have 70

percent NHS staff.

"There is a proposal that the company will get a 15 percent bonus per operation they do, more than if the operation was done on the NHS."

He explained the centres could "cream off the easy operations and get more money for doing it.

"You can't produce a jot of evidence that competition is to anyone's advantage."

David Price, a health researcher at University College London, backed up Dobson's arguments.

He said, "The NHS is a massive institution that is being packaged and sold off.

"This is the most critical moment in its whole history.

"What is happening in the NHS is not, as the government says, about introducing equality—it is about destroying all mechanisms of equality.

"What we are hearing is not 'spin' or 'sexing up'—it is straight misinformation."

STOP PRESS

TONY BLAIR is to welcome fellow warmonger George Bush to a four-day state visit to Britain in November.

Reacting to the news, Tony Benn said, "President Bush will not be welcome in Britain. His war killed thousands of people and left Iraq in chaos and now Iraq's assets are to be sold off on the world market."

The Stop the War Coalition is planning to organise mass protests against Bush.

■ For more information contact 020 7053 2153 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk

'Beggar my neighbour'

FRANK DOBSON also slammed the government's key policy of foundation hospitals when he spoke in Sunderland last week.

These elite hospitals will increase the role of business and profit in the NHS, and will create a two-tier health service.

The plan stung 60 Labour MPs into voting against the government in parliament in July. Blair saw his government's majority fall from 171 to just 35.

Dobson admitted, "The

government thought it was going to lose that night. I wish to god they had."

He explained that foundation hospitals would have more funds and freedoms than NHS hospitals which would mean they could poach NHS staff:

"I don't think beggar my neighbour is a good slogan for the NHS."

And he took apart Blair's arguments to justify the elite hospitals.

"Local people in control? Pull the other one. The hospital

and services will not be run in any way whatever by any elected governors.

"They will be run by an executive board of directors. The non-executive directors on that board will be drawn from those with expertise in business, legal and financial matters.

"As for the regulator that will be introduced, I said to Tony Blair, 'If the bill goes through can I be the regulator? Because they will have more powers than the secretary of state.'"

School stockmarket

WHEN TONY Blair opened Britain's first purpose-built new academy school in south London last week it gave a glimpse of his vision for education.

The academy has a business court with a mini stock exchange and trading floor.

Professor Alex Reed CBE, who is the founder of Reed Executive Recruitment, has put £2

million into another academy in west London.

He says, "The two specialisms in this school will be enterprise, which is something very close to my heart, and sport.

"It's not that we want to turn out lots of Richard Bransons.

"But we want students to imbibe the spirit of enterprise in everything they do."

International Socialism 100

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Paul McGarr assesses Stephen Jay Gould
Murray Smith on challenging reformism

£4 from International Socialism, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH
Phone 020 7538 3308 E-mail isj@swp.org.uk

AND ANOTHER THING...

Do sums for Gordon Brown

THE GOVERNMENT has launched a desperate campaign to rescue its plans for top-up fees.

Its plans to allow some universities to charge up to £3,000 a year extra in tuition fees have created fury.

The government and the heads of elite universities argue that more money is needed to fund higher education.

Years of underfunding have left many universities in a dilapidated state, and staff underpaid. But the idea that the only way to raise the funds is to impose fees on students is nonsense.

Education secretary Charles Clarke says top-up fees will raise £700 million from students.

Just last week chancellor Gordon Brown announced that he was pumping another £1.25 billion into the occupation of Iraq.

If you took the money wasted on a brutal occupation of a foreign country and put it instead into higher education how much would you still have left?

Answers on a postcard to G Brown, 11 Downing Street, London W1.

Can't pay, won't pay

"THERE HAS not yet been a riot in Trafalgar Square of the sort that led to the abolition of the poll tax and Margaret Thatcher's departure from 10 Downing Street. But police authorities are warning of civil disorder as anger grows over another year of council tax rises."

That was the lead editorial in the Financial Times business paper on Tuesday. In Devon pensioners are organising to refuse to pay this year's increase. There are reports of other protests being planned.

No wonder. The tax has risen massively this year and bills have nearly doubled in the ten years since it was introduced.

The blame lies with central government which has restricted local council funding.

What's the answer? One is to demand the government puts funding services above paying for war. The other is to demand the council tax is scrapped and replaced with a local income tax.

In Scotland the Scottish Socialist Party has worked out that this could leave over three-quarters of people better off, save the poorest up to £25 a week, and raise millions for services.

Lies that could f*** Blair

THE LATEST revelations from the Hutton inquiry show once more how those at the heart of government have lied and bullied.

Blair's (now ex) henchman Alastair Campbell was waging a vendetta on the BBC and its reporter Andrew Gilligan, despite his earlier denials.

He and Blair were determined to "fuck Gilligan", as Campbell's diary entry about the BBC reporter revealed this week.

However, the Hutton inquiry is missing the key questions. The real issue is that the government said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, when there were none. This is what sparked the whole row which led to the Hutton inquiry. See centre pages for more on Hutton, Blair and the anti-war movement

Socialist Review

BLOOD, OIL, LIES

How to end the occupation of Iraq

by Mark Serwotka, Lindsey German, Ken Loach, Asad Rehman and others
Plus Mike Davis investigates Europe's heatwave, and Chris Nineham on the WTO

£2 from Socialist Worker sellers or phone 020 7538 3308

The vacuum in British politics

A CLEAR majority of people in Britain now think the war on Iraq was wrong.

An opinion poll in the Guardian on Monday showed 53 percent think the war was unjustified and only 38 percent believe it was right to attack Iraq.

This is the reality looming over Tony Blair at his party's conference starting on Sunday.

It isn't just Iraq that has turned people against Blair. There is also strong opposition to a whole range of other key policies, especially foundation hospitals and top-up fees for students.

But there is not as yet a strong enough focus for the disillusionment against Blair.

This was shown most dramatically in last week's Brent East by-election.

Thousands in Brent expressed their disgust with Blair by voting for the Liberal Democrats. The Liberal Democrats won, overturning a 13,000 Labour majority.

Blair's strongest claim to his party was that, although they might not like him much, he was good at winning elections. Now that golden touch has turned to lead.

After the election, Labour had to admit that the war was a major issue—and their candidate had put on his website that he backed the stand Blair had taken.

The momentum behind the Lib Dems' campaign came from a left wing desire to punish Blair. But they have never been, and are not now, a left wing party.

Not of the left

At their conference this week they have queued to insist they are not a party of "left or right". Their leader Charles Kennedy regards the whole question of left or right as "outdated".

When Kennedy goes on like this, he sounds just like Tony Blair when he was worming his way to the top of the Labour Party. And when they get into office Liberal Democrats act just like New Labour in office.

Around half of the 16 candidates in Brent were to the left of New Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Taken together, even without the Green Party, they attracted over 1,000 votes. The highest number went to Brian Butterworth, standing for the Socialist Alliance Against the War, who won 361 votes.

HUTTON REMEMBER THE REAL ISSUES



Protests organised by the Stop the War Coalition outside the Hutton inquiry have focused attention on the real issues around Blair's lies. The details of what went on should not obscure the fact that no weapons of mass destruction have been found and the war was based on a lie

If the other left candidates had thrown their weight behind Brian Butterworth the left would have got much closer to the critical mass which is needed for a real breakthrough.

But the vote was divided.

The biggest responsibility for allowing the Lib Dems to capitalise on the anti-war feeling in Brent lies with those left wingers who cling to Blair's Labour Party.

Almost all the trade union leaders who got their positions by slating Blair and his policies encouraged people in Brent to vote for New Labour.

Ken Livingstone was elected mayor of London because he stood to the

left of Blair. But in Brent he was out campaigning for the party which had expelled him.

The Guardian's Martin Kettle wrote this week that, because the left candidates had taken more votes than the Liberals' majority, it was "a victory for the also-rans".

He added that the local and European elections in June 2004 give parties beyond Labour, the Lib Dems and the Tories an "immense opportunity to consolidate their positions". He is right.

That task would be much easier if left wing union leaders stopped arguing that all we can do is stick with Labour and hope Brown replaces Blair.

There is a vacuum in British politics to the left of New Labour. The magnificent anti-war movement has transformed, and continues to transform the political landscape.

It will be a tragedy if the Liberals continue to be the main beneficiaries of this.

There is the even more worrying danger that, as in the past, the right can gain from the deep disillusionment with Labour.

The anti-war protests have shown the forces exist to fill the vacuum on the left. People have to stop clinging on to the Labour Party and take the steps to turn the potential into reality.

Socialist Worker Appeal

OUR supporters have already raised £34,302 in our appeal to raise £150,000.

We are organising a workplace collection day on

Wednesday 1 October.

Socialist Worker supporters in Greenwich council have already collected a whopping £498. We

also received £40 from Sheffield University workers and £15 from Clay Cross hospital.

We urge all of our readers to follow their lead.

Groups of Socialist Worker supporters are organising fundraising events in many areas where

anti-capitalists can come together, have fun, talk politics and raise money to fund the paper.

There are hundreds of brilliant films around.

In Chesterfield a season of "Fightback Films" has been organised starting with Battle of Chile and also including

Bowling for Columbine and Land and Freedom.

Supporters in Tottenham are organising film showings as part of Black History month. In Hounslow there is a club night with up and coming hip-hop bands The Unpeople and GM Baby.

"As we move into a new political order, where all mainstream parties have become the same, it is important for all working class people to have a choice that has a clear agenda for socialist politics." Bill O'Dowd, chair of Stratford 1 RMT union branch

Two-way process

WE WANT Socialist Worker to be part of every strike and every campaign. Socialist Worker sellers in Leeds told me about meeting a worker from the Hydro Aluminium Motorcast factory:

"While we were selling the paper on Saturday, a rep from the Amicus union came to our stall and told us that his workplace was threatened with closure. He asked if we could help."

"Socialist Worker readers helped to launch a statement of support which is being circulated around workplaces across Leeds. The rep wrote a report on the dispute to go in this week's paper."

"We sold eight copies at the factory last week and we are planning to go back with the new paper."

After Brent vote

AFTER THE Brent by-election, Socialist Worker sellers involved with the campaign tell me that they are keen to maintain the political relationships they established in the area:

"The day after the by-election 35 people came together for a drink to relax after the work of the campaign."

"It turned into a really positive meeting. People discussed the result and where next for the Socialist Alliance. They agreed to make a banner for the anti-war demonstration."

"When the Socialist Workers came out there was a brilliant response."

"Two people who had come from the mosque bought the paper straight away, as did the ex Labour Party people present. The first person to buy the paper was someone who had been concerned about us selling Socialist Worker at a Socialist Alliance event. Altogether we sold 14 papers."

Flying high

THERE HAVE been a number of strikes around Heathrow airport in London recently. An activist who works there has been selling Socialist Worker to union reps involved in the check-in dispute. He says that he used to be hesitant about being seen as pushing a political agenda.

But, as one of his colleagues told him, "If you're not pursuing a political agenda, you must be pursuing a personal one."

He says, "The Pilger and Mike Davis articles, together with a strong front page, made it easy to sell. Out of 18 union reps at a meeting, nine bought a copy."

How it's done

FERGUS IS a student in Manchester. He told me about a stall they ran on the city's Market Street to build the Stop the War Coalition demonstration and sell Socialist Worker.

He says that sales of the paper are at their highest since the 15 February demonstration, reaching 195 papers last Saturday.

He adds, "We had an interesting stall with books, pamphlets, flags, leaflets, placards and a megaphone. One thing people noticed was that some people with military connections came and signed the petition to get the troops out of Iraq." MICHAEL BRADLEY Circulation Department

Lib Dems left pretenders

MANY PEOPLE who voted for the winning Liberal Democrat in the Brent by-election last week were motivated by good reasons.

Brent saw traditional Labour voters turn away from Blair in disgust at his government's record on the war, privatisation and public services.

Many voted Lib Dem believing this was, on the day, he way to give Blair a bloody ose.

An opinion poll in the imes on Monday confirmed hat most people now see the ib Dems as to the left of ew Labour. Certainly Blair s so right wing that on many ssues the Lib Dems can ppear more left wing.

Much of the Lib Dems' urrent success reflects the erception that the party's eader, Charles Kennedy, op-osed the war on Iraq.

The party also opposes ew Labour's plan for top-up uition fees in higher educa- ion, criticises the rabid out-ursts of home secretary avid Blunkett over refugees, nd makes noises against rivatisation.

The Lib Dems even make ild suggestions for very lightly increasing the top ate of tax on those grab- ing over £100,000 a year.

On any close inspection he differences between Lib em and New Labour poli- ies are not that great, and the ib Dem policies are hardly eft wing or radical.

That such timid proposals an seem any good says more bout how rotten New abour has become.

The Lib Dems have un-oubtedly ridden the opposi- ion to the war on Iraq to gain upport.

Charles Kennedy did, ery cautiously, criticise Blair ver the war. But he was areful not to throw the party ully behind the anti-war ovement, or to consistently rge people to protest and emonstrate to stop the war.

And his opposition lasted nly until the war actually tarted. He then quickly wung into line to back the ar and the killing in Iraq.

Now that things are going adly for Blair over Iraq, ennedy has once again tarted making critical noises.

Judges

There is little of principle n Kennedy's stance, and a lot f manoeuvring to try to capitalise on what he judges to e the public mood.

And if on many issues the ib Dems appear to the left of ew Labour, they can also ine up to the right of Blair on ey issues.

So, for example, the Lib ems oppose the increase in he minimum wage to £4.85 n hour.

The increase is way short f what is needed, but for the ib Dems it is "a dangerous recedent". No doubt such talk elps them with one of their ey support bases, among mall businessmen.

The Lib Dem manifesto ardly sounds like a radical lternative to either New abour or the Tories.

It declares, "We are com- itted to a free market econ- my in which enterprise hrives. Competition and open arkets are by far the best uarantee of wealth creation."

And the criticisms the Lib ems made of Blair over Iraq ould be set against their upport for Britain's Trident uclear missile system, and

PAUL McGARR on the Lib Dems' opportunism in Brent East

every other war of the last 20 years from the Falklands to the first Gulf War and the Balkans.

Trade unionists tempted by the Lib Dems should ponder the party's record of support- ing all the anti-union laws, and in the 1980s backing Thatcher against the miners and Rupert Murdoch against the print unions.

Over recent years the Lib Dems have tried to feed off disillusion with New Labour among working class voters in inner cities by appearing to be against public service cuts and privatisation.

But the reality of Liberal Democrat councils in office is that they pursue both with all the enthusiasm of the most rabid New Labour authority.

A few years ago the Lib Dems won office in Sheffield on the back of disillusion with a New Labour council that was pushing cuts and privatisation.

Agenda

The Lib Dem council then pursued an agenda of slash- ing services and accelerated privatisation.

In Kirklees the Lib Dem council last year pushed through a scandalous Private Finance Initiative scheme for schools, a deal involving the Jarvis private rail mainte- nance company infamous from the Potters Bar crash.

In London the new Lib Dem council in Islington has closed community centres and pensioners' clubs. Its attitude to its workforce was summed up by calling its caretakers who it has threatened with re- dundancy "skivers".

The truth about the Lib Dems is that they are arch- opportunist, taking any which way in an unprincipled chase for votes.

So in Brent, a solidly working class constituency with large numbers of people angry with Blair over the war, privatisation and public services, the Lib Dems put on a left face.

But most of the key seats the Lib Dems hope to target at the next general election are Tory seats.

They are likely to draw much more on the sections of their manifesto which talk of how "Labour has over regulat- ed", of "cuts in business rates", of "enterprise" and the virtues of "the market economy".

It would be a historic tragedy if people like this, and politicians with the spineless- ness of Charles Kennedy, were allowed to reap the po- litical benefit from the great- est wave of radicalisation most of us have ever seen.

To ensure that this doesn't happen is the challenge for all on the left—and above all those who chase the mirage of "reclaiming" Labour, a doomed journey from which only the Lib Dems will gain.

inside the system

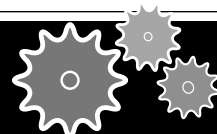


FIGURE IT OUT

238

is the amount House of Lords peers can claim for one day's subsistence and travel costs (£62), London accommodation (£124) and secretarial costs (£52). This compares to the £7.80 a day a 25 year old gets on Jobseeker's Allowance.

No 42 coming in a few years

HOW LONG have you waited for a bus? How about 75 years?

The grandparents of someone I know moved into an estate in the North Downs in Coulsdon, Surrey, in 1927 when it was first built.

They were promised a bus service within a year. So they waited. And waited.

The buses finally started running last month.

✉ **Thanks to Colin Frost-Herbert**

The rich are at the Gates

THE RICH in the US have increased their personal wealth over the last 12 months, according to Forbes magazine.

The total net worth of the 400 richest in the US rose by 10 percent to hit \$935 billion.

Microsoft boss Bill Gates is still the US's fattest cat at \$46 billion.

Microsoft have also spawned the US's third richest man, Paul Allen, who is worth \$22 billion.

Berlusconi—friend or foe?

THOSE WHO defend Israel and its slaughter of the Palestinians accuse their critics of being anti-Semitic.

But a Zionist organisation based in New York seems willing to forget about anti-Semitism in its desperate rush to back the warmonger George Bush.

The Anti-Defamation League is to give Italy's prime minister Silvio Berlusconi a Distinguished Statesman Award.

The league says the award is for Berlusconi's support of the US war in Iraq and his policies. Berlusconi is "a friend, he's a good friend", said the league's national director.

Yet last week Berlusconi defended Italy's fascist leader Mussolini, who began persecuting Jews in 1938.

The bullying bosses who leave us weeping

THE BRUTAL reality of working life in Britain was shown in two industrial tribunal cases revealed in the press last week.

Joanne MacDonald, a former telesales worker, lost her baby after being sacked for being pregnant.

Boss David Rook had reduced Joanne to tears when she told him of her pregnancy.

"He told me he was horri- fied. He left me for about ten minutes, then came back and told me to leave," said Joanne.

"He said it was because I couldn't meet my contractual hours, which wasn't true.

"I was devastated to be preg- nant and sacked. I had the wor- ries of finding another job and money worries."

Four days later a routine



Edward Haughey: bully

scan showed the baby's heart- beat had stopped.

Joanne won £11,500 dam- ages after taking electronics firm Crimpterm to an industrial tri- bunal for unfair dismissal.

A housekeeper in Carlisle's Corby Castle also won her

industrial tribunal against mul- timillionaire boss Edward Haughey.

Linda Heaton worked long hours at Haughey's castle. On 7 December, the night of fraught preparations for a six-course hunting banquet, she fled the castle in tears.

Haughey claims she re- signed on the spot and decided to dismiss her.

But Linda explained to the tribunal that she was too upset at the news of her elderly mother getting cancer to carry on working.

Haughey had also interro- gated her over a missing gold Rolls-Royce menu holder, that was later found in his other home in Northern Ireland.

Linda was awarded £7,339 for wrongful dismissal.



When murder is a bonus

A POLICE officer in Cam- bridgeshire boasted to a murder victim's family about how much overtime the case had made him.

He also took them to the wrong murder scene.

That is just one of the almost 1,000 serious com- plaints upheld against the police last year.

The watchdog that looks

into complaints said the rising rate was "significant and unprecedented".

The total number of complaints is much higher. The Police Complaints Au- thority says it only upheld 26 percent of all those reported.

The authority also found that sexist officers were allowed to keep their jobs

when they should have been sacked.

PC David Wyvill is another example of an officer you wouldn't want to run into.

Colin May had been hit by a police car as officers chased him.

As Colin lay injured PC Wyvill threatened to tread on his broken leg. The officer was fined £500.

Army's big night out

WHAT DO peacekeeping forces actually do?

Take the case of four army medics in Bosnia who disobeyed orders to stay in camp and went ahead with their New Year's Eve drunken pub crawl.

They sneaked out wearing full camouflage gear and Red Cross armbands, and took semi-automatic rifles and pistols with them to the Bosnian town of Bos Gradiska.

In the celebrations local partygoers threw a firecracker, and the four

thought they were under fire.

The squaddies cocked their loaded guns and pointed them at the horrified civilians.

It took a standoff with Bosnian armed police to defuse the situation.

When the four returned to camp they could not go back to work as they were too drunk to drive an ambulance.

A court martial in Aldershot sentenced the four to three months in military prison.



WHO SAYS?

"I think the press self muzzled. Certainly television, and perhaps to a certain extent my station, was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did put a climate of fear and self censorship, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did."

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR
CNN war correspondent

"I'm not aware that his name was leaked. It was certainly not leaked by me, and I assure you that we made great efforts to ensure Dr Kelly's anonymity."
GEOFF HOON
BBC interview, 19 July

"GH and I agreed it would fuck Gilligan if that [Kelly] was his source. He said he was an expert rather than a spy or full time MoD official."
ALASTAIR CAMPBELL
in his diary, 4 July

"Bonkers Bruno Locked Away."
THE SUN
front page headline on early edition of last Tuesday's paper

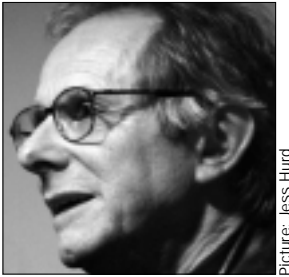
"Sad Bruno In Mental Home."
THE SUN
headline on later edition



Do you have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

LABOUR'S CONFERENCE

SPEAKING OUT



Ken Loach

'Which party are they reclaiming?'

'I WANT to put a question to those who are campaigning to reclaim the Labour Party.

I simply want to ask them, which Labour Party would they like to reclaim?

Would they like to reclaim Neil Kinnock's Labour Party, for example? Kinnock, who tore the left out of the party, and who stood by while the miners were beaten?

Would you like Jim Callaghan's Labour Party, with its pay norms, where people were asked to take pay cuts?

Or would you like Harold Wilson's, with his politically motivated attack on the seamen and his feriously anti trade union struggles?

Or Clement Attlee, who I guess was the best of the bunch? But let's remember when Attlee's government nationalised industries, it didn't do it to put the working class in power.

It did it to acquire an infrastructure on which companies could then make profits.

Or would they prefer Blair's nearest equivalent, Ramsay MacDonald, who in 1926 betrayed the General Strike and in the 1930s left the Labour Party and joined the Tories and formed the national government?

Which of those Labour Parties would they like? I think the idea of reclaiming Labour is a lost cause.'

Film director KEN LOACH

'The Blair clique won't silence me'

'THE LABOUR Party seems determined to expel me after three decades of membership.

I face a hearing in front of three officials on 22 October.

It is clear to me that the decision does not rest with those three, but will be taken by Tony Blair and his court.

A string of further charges have now been levelled at me.

These include the "crimes" of congratulating an anti-war candidate on his election to the Preston council chamber, and calling on anti-war campaigners in Plymouth to hold their MP to account.

The documents sent to me from the party's headquarters include verbatim transcripts of speeches I made at Stop the War Coalition public meetings.

That Labour Party officials are secretly recording such meetings should send a shiver down the spine of everyone who cares about democracy.

It is the behaviour of the Blair clique that has brought the Labour Party into disrepute, not the actions of those of us who opposed the war.

I do not intend to be silenced. I will continue to speak out for peace and justice—whether inside the Labour Party or out of it, whether in parliament or not.'

GEORGE GALLOWAY

Delegates against the war at last year's Labour Party conference

Blair should pay for his war crimes

The Labour Party's conference begins in Bournemouth this Sunday after its shattering defeat in Brent East

DELEGATES COULD potentially humiliate Tony Blair at Labour's conference.

It will be a test for the union leaders—if they really used their power they could wound Blair fatally and force his resignation.

Party managers will find it very hard to keep Iraq off the agenda and, if there is a proper debate, then there will be motions directly rejecting what the government has done.

If such a motion was passed it would not of course lead to immediate orders for withdrawal.

The truth is that—just like the motion passed in 2000 calling for pensions linked to earnings and last

year's motion passed against PFI—the government would ignore the conference.

The real Labour tradition for a century has been that delegates can vote but ministers do largely what they want.

But what a blow it would be to Blair if his own party conference—stage managed, neutered and battered into line—voted against the central policy of his second term! It would show that Blair was utterly isolated.

On the streets

But although there has been much opposition inside the party, it has been ineffective in halting Blair's war drive. The opposition he really feared was on the streets, not inside the party.

Some Labour MPs voted against the war—but the solid majority had blood on their hands.

Even in the biggest rebellion, 247 backed the government while 139 did not.

Significant numbers of Labour

members have despaired of the party and ripped up their membership cards because of the war. Tens of thousands more have seriously considered it.

A year ago the Labour conference very nearly passed an anti-war motion.

If just a few big unions had changed their votes then Bush's most trusted ally would have had his war policy rejected. Some 40 per cent of the conference voted to oppose totally any military action against Iraq.

The motion won backing from a third of delegates from local Labour parties, and over half of the delegates from trade unions.

The vote was even more remarkable because the anti-war position was not given a fair hearing.

During the debate there were 21 speeches directly on the question of war and Iraq. Fifteen of those called were in support of the leadership's line.

Even then the overall debate went very badly for Blair.

Just minutes before it was due to be voted on, the leadership withdrew an executive statement which pointed towards support for war.

The motion which was eventually passed was not clearly anti-war, but neither did it give Blair a free hand. It said British policy should be to go through the UN, and that force should be a last resort to "enforce UN decisions".

Incredibly weak

Behind the scenes key delegates were reassured that this meant there would have to be a second UN resolution before New Labour would back a war.

International development secretary Clare Short told the press that she would be "staggered if there is not a second resolution" (not so staggered that it stopped her voting for war without one, however).

Party managers rushed round telling delegates it would be disastrous if Blair was defeated again, having already lost over privatisation earlier in the week.

At the time many of the pro-Blair speakers seemed incredibly weak. Now their arguments seem ludicrous.

For example, Rhondda MP Chris Bryant said, "There is a lot of talk about Tony being Bush's poodle, but I wonder who is wearing the dog collar."

"It was Tony who told George to declare in favour of a Palestinian state. It was Tony who forced George to go to the UN. It's Tony who is insisting the central aim of any war is not regime change but disarmament."

Blair posed as the man who, far from being a warmonger, was going to dispense justice for all. He said, "We need coalitions not just to deal with evil by force if necessary, but coalitions for peace, coalitions to tackle poverty, ignorance and disease."

What has happened since? Mass murder in Iraq—and absolutely nothing effective on any of the other issues Blair mentioned.

CHARLIE KIMBER

Part of a rotten tradition of backing imperialist wars

JUST BEFORE the 2002 Labour conference 53 Labour MPs voted against the leadership over the possibility of war in Iraq.

The numbers remained around the same level for the next four months—32 Labour MPs voted against war in November, and 41 in January.

Such pitiable numbers were no threat to Blair's war drive.

But then came 15 February, and two million on the streets. The mood shifted and even affected parliament.

On 26 February 122 Labour MPs rebelled. In the key debate on 18 March, the eve of war, 139 Labour MPs backed

a motion against attacking Iraq.

This was despite intense lobbying from Blair, Brown and the rest of the hierarchy.

Cherie Blair was wheeled out to pressure women MPs. Christian members of the cabinet were used to persuade their co-religionists.

The last year has shown just how rotten

the Labour Party is.

It has continued its terrible tradition of backing imperialist wars from the First World War to the Falklands and Afghanistan.

Yes, 139 Labour MPs voted against war on 18 March.

But 247 supported the government and 24 did not vote. And of the

139 who voted the right way, only about one in ten went on to actively oppose the war.

The Labour Party has always been pulled towards backing "the national interest" (a myth to cover up class divisions) before international class interests.

Throughout, Labour members have been

persuaded to put the interests of the party leaders before the interests of the working class.

This is not just about individual failings—it is about the whole way that Labour operates within the system.

That is why it so urgent to discuss building a credible socialist alternative.

Letters@socialistworker.co.uk

SEND TO PO BOX 82 LONDON E3 3LH | PHONE 020 7538 0828 | FAX 020 7538 0140

A hollow victory

THE LIB Dem victory in Brent, won on a 36 percent turnout, reflected the electorate's view of Blair and New Labour more than anything else. They do not trust Blair—they rejected Rob Evans and Ken Livingstone's last minute appeal. Nor were they impressed by Tory Uma.

Now the electorate can put under the microscope the failed policies of the Lib Dems, who claimed they were anti-war but did not call for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

As an Islington councillor, new MP Sarah Teather helped close, cut and privatise community services, being just as Tory as New Labour is.

We are more concerned in asking why 66 percent of the electorate did not vote. Many were confused over boundary changes. Even more were fed up with being let down at local and national level by Blair and Co.

We in the Socialist Alliance will continue to work with all anti-war and anti-privatisation groups in fighting for peace and public services.

Alf Filer
press officer Brent East
Socialist Alliance

Backing for Cairo

MY UNION branch, London Fire Authority Union, has voted to send two delegates to the second Conference Against US Aggression in Cairo in December.

We also agreed to send a letter of protest to Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, over the recent arrest of five anti-war activists.

Egypt is the second biggest recipient of US aid in the world, yet has a long record of vicious repression.

Workers in Britain can show solidarity by sending delegations to Cairo.

Tony Phillips
branch secretary, London Fire Authority Union (personal capacity)

Cairo Conference Against US Aggression, 13-14 December.
Go to www.stopwar.org.uk

Don't treat us like we are sex objects

I WAS really alarmed when a male friend told me that on a night out someone had suggested going to a strip club. When he protested they said he was a loser and every proper man had to go to a strip club.

They said he was abnormal for never having visited a prostitute, as it was something you did with friends and didn't count as cheating on your girlfriend.

What was most appalling was that these were all young men in their early twenties who had been to university and were in other respects relatively normal.

However, they seemed to have complete disrespect for women and saw nothing wrong with their actions.

To bosses, workers like these in a Scottish factory are just faceless robots

They think people like us are just numbers

DUE TO my husband being despicably treated at the hands of the TNT/Sony company he worked for, I am enclosing a copy of a letter I have sent to various appropriate people.

I do not know if there is anything you can do, but I thought your readers should be aware of what tricks can be pulled on loyal employees.

"I am writing to express my disgust and outrage at the way my husband has been treated.

"When he was initially employed through an agency, you were told the extent of his qualifications and experience.

"He worked long hours, sometimes until midnight, enthusiastically performing his tasks so well he was

constantly praised.

"He was verbally told that he was going to be made permanent sooner rather than later.

"It is despicable enough to be told that he was not wanted, but not to even be given a proper explanation?

"A second-hand message was received from the agency, as no one had the decency to tell him to his face.

"To wait until he went on holiday was unforgivable.

"We had the first nice holiday we have had for a very long time, in the past always going under a cloud because of the worries waiting on our return.

"We realise that people like us are just a number and are totally unimportant to the 'well set up and

comfortably smug' and we are also painfully aware that, as things stand, we do not have any rights.

"To be sure life is going to improve at last and you can see your way clear to being financially stable again, only to have the rug pulled out from under you is devastating, but we would not expect you to understand.

"We are determined that we will not just be used. We do have feelings and, believe it or not, a modicum of intelligence.

"Even though we can do nothing about it, we are not going to stupidly accept this gross injustice without expressing strong views."

Josephine Ansaldo-Nixon
Telford

Black police face Met racism

THE ATTEMPTED fit-up of top black police officer Ali Dzaei shows that, despite the rhetoric, institutional racism is alive and well in the Metropolitan Police.

We were told after the Lawrence inquiry that the Met was to be "anti-racist" and attract a flood of black officers.

The Met said the Dzaei inquiry was a one-off they had to investigate. Yet Dzaei is just one of a number of officers in the Black Police Association (BPA) who have been effectively "neutralised".

Remember Sergeant Gurpal Viri—accused of sending racist mail to

himself? Cleared. What about BPA leader Leroy Logan—accused of fiddling expenses and subject to a million-pound investigation? Cleared. And another BPA leader, Tariq Gaffur, "suspected" of corruption and put under surveillance? No evidence found.

There is a campaign to smash the BPA and money is no object—the investigation on Dzaei has cost £7 million (so far).

If this is what the Met do to their own, what they are prepared to get up to against ordinary members of the black community? Hassan Mahamdallie
London

Busting the BNP

A COUPLE of weeks ago I found out that the Nazi BNP were due to hold a public meeting in the beautiful multi-ethnic city of Bradford.

Bradford's Tory council let them book a public room to spread their racist poison.

The outrage at the council's action was felt right across the labour movement. A campaign to stop the meeting was launched.

I lodged a complaint on the council's website and was contacted by an Asian council worker who urged me to get everybody to phone up and protest.

The meeting was cancelled as it was deemed to be illegally inciting racial hatred. Angela Shann
Sheffield

YOUR VIEW ●●●

Stop dead-end road bypass

AN 80-strong demonstration marched through Wigan town centre two Saturdays ago to protest at the New Labour council's plans to build a new road bypass.

The council laid its plans days after the government announced its £7 billion roadbuilding scheme.

The march followed a recent meeting of 600 residents and an angry lobby of the council by 150 people.

Campaigners say the road will not reduce congestion, but will cause pollution and damage people's health.

Dave Lowe
Wigan Socialist Alliance



Thai protest

Thailand will not be for sale

OVER 5,000 people joined the biggest demonstration Thailand has seen in recent years to mark the opening of the Cancun WTO conference.

Farmers from across the country joined trade unionists, NGOs, and contingents from the rail, dockers, bus and other unions outside the US and European Union embassies.

Banners declared "Thailand is not for sale", "Workers against global capitalism" and "World terrorist organisation".

Preparations are now under way to give a warm reception to George Bush when he visits the Thai capital next month.

Carmela Ozzi
from Thailand

Put the case for asylum seekers

ON A Socialist Worker sale a single mum signed our petition.

She was very angry with Blair, saying she was sick of him picking on single mothers. I added, "And the refugees," and we started a discussion.

At first, she agreed with a friend who lived near an asylum seekers' detention centre and didn't want them here.

But after we talked about the rich getting us to blame asylum seekers instead of them, she bought Socialist Worker.

If we hadn't talked, the only arguments she would have heard would have been hostile to refugees.

Paul Thatcher
Portsmouth

Disarming the war profiteers

WHILE THE arms fair was taking place in London's Docklands, anti-war campaigners and trade unionists in Camden held a lunchtime protest outside the headquarters of arms manufacturers Lockheed Martin.

Local Unison and GMB/Apex banners were present, along with Stop the War Coalition banners.

Protesters had a petition signed by hundreds of people, but the company refused to accept it.

Liz Wheatley
Camden Stop the War Coalition

Socialist Worker speaks for me

I HAVE had no choice but to subscribe to Socialist Worker.

It is the voice of the people and says we are heading for Vietnam mark two.

We are paying a war tax. The money should be spent on education, hospitals, decent pay and pensions.

David MacDonald
Manchester Stop the War Coalition

In defence of British culture

THERE'S BEEN a recent trend amongst socialists to either smear British (especially English) identity as racist, or dismiss it as nonexistent and label us mongrels.

We can have both St Patrick and St George, both chicken tikka masala and fish and chips, both Notting Hill Carnival and



You've had your chips

trooping the colour, both Ramadan and Christmas.

Or are you saying that in a multicultural Britain there's no place for British culture?

Andy Reade
Bristol

New generation opens its eyes

MY FATHER once told me, that the Spanish Civil war had been a great eye-opener for his generation.

I believe Iraq has been for this one. We need to utilise all that energy and make sure that people—especially the young—see a wider context than opposition to the war.

For example, we should link the amount spent on the war to cuts in health, education, social security, etc.

Margaret Banks
by e-mail

‘Bush is in trouble and it’s getting deep’ Alexander Cockburn page two	‘Echoes of Bloody Sunday in Fallujah’ Eamonn McCann page three	‘Israel is a semi-apartheid state’ Ilan Pappé page six	‘We need a revolution to get rid of capitalism’ Alex Callinicos page seven
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Socialist Worker

DEMONSTRATION SPECIAL

The US military are carrying out a reign of terror in Iraq

The bloody reality of the new war in Iraq

WITH EVERY day that passes, the occupation in Iraq is creating more horror and hardship for the country’s people. There are 1,000 killings a week in Iraq, Independent journalist Robert Fisk reported recently.

This has been confirmed since by other journalists who have visited the country’s morgues.

In a typical day’s work, US troops shot up a wedding, killing a 14 year old boy and wounding six other people, on Thursday of last week.

Alongside the deaths is a marked deterioration in the lives of every Iraqi right across the country.

“It is chaos, impoverishment, it’s anything but what was promised to them by the coalition partners in

London and Washington.”

These were the words of Hans von Sponeck, a former UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq who ran the “oil for food” programme.

He told Socialist Worker that, although life for Iraqis was miserable under the Saddam Hussein dictatorship, “fundamental things were obtainable. A food basket was there once a month. Electricity was never good, but it’s worse now.

“Reconstruction makes little progress. The schools are not re-opening, people are afraid to go out on the streets.

“The overall living conditions for the Iraqi people are significantly worse than they were when Saddam Hussein was in charge.”

George Bush announced in May of this year the end of “major combat operations” in Iraq. But

since then, as Fisk’s report shows, the number of Iraqis killed has risen each month.

Hans von Sponeck dismisses the US government’s claim that the growing resistance to the occupation is made up of remnants of the old regime, or terrorists coming across the border from Iran or Syria.

He says, “You probably have new recruits from among the Iraqi population because they are angry and hateful.

“How many people have lost members of their families during the war—and since—because of the indiscriminate, undisciplined behaviour of the troops?”

The upsurge in fighting in Iraq has thrown the whole of George Bush’s strategy into crisis.

Deepening discontent in Iraq

and the growing unpopularity of the occupation in the US and Britain mean that Bush and Blair are faced with a serious dilemma.

Paying for support

They know if they pull out of Iraq it would be a massive blow to US power.

At the same time they are struggling to find sufficient troops to maintain a grip on Iraq. Bush has announced that he will need an extra \$87 billion to pay for the occupation.

Gordon Brown plans to suck more money out of schools and hospitals to pay for British support. There are growing signs of discontent among troops serving in Iraq. Tim Predmore, a US soldier on active duty in Iraq, recently wrote an article talking about the occupation.

“Americans are dying. There are an estimated ten to 14 attacks every day,” he writes. “As the body count continues to grow, it would appear that there is no end in sight.

“So, then, what is our purpose here? Was this invasion due to weapons of mass destruction, as we so often heard? If so, where are they?

“Did we invade to dispose of a leader and his regime on the account of close association with Osama Bin Laden? If so, where is the proof? Or is it that our incursion is a result of our own economic advantage?

“Iraq’s oil can be refined at the lowest cost of any in the world. Coincidence?”

In this special section we present the arguments and analysis to build the movement against the occupation.

No sign of liberation

Hamid Karzai, leader of Afghanistan, is a guest at Labour’s conference.

Yvonne Ridley spoke to Socialist Worker

I RECENTLY went undercover to Afghanistan disguised as an Afghani woman.

I went to Bermil, because I heard US forces had killed an Afghani family there. They sent a laser-guided missile into their home.

The villagers saw what happened but US troops stopped them from rescuing people.

Eleven children were killed and one mother lost all her nine children. Days later a senior US army officer returned and handed over the equivalent of \$10,000.

So now we know what an Afghan child’s life is worth to the US—less than \$1,000. These children were just as innocent as those who died in the Lockerbie disaster.

Just like in Iraq, the US has no idea about the local culture.

US forces are not peacekeepers. Hamid Karzai is known here as the mayor of Kabul, although even in Kabul he is coming under increasing attack.

Nowhere in Afghanistan can you say life has improved since the war ended. The warlords are regrouping. The country is becoming more dangerous. The US presence attracts “jihadis” like a magnet.

If the US left, things would be much better.

Life hasn’t improved one bit for ordinary people since the US installed its puppet regime.

Aid agencies hardly dare step outside Kabul. People remain desperately poor. Even in Kabul, things aren’t better. You don’t exactly see career women flourishing. The first women’s minister was hounded from her job.

Ethnic tensions are rising as people from one tribe return home to the capital to find their homes have been taken by people from another tribe.

I would love to say things are getting better, but Afghanistan is a total mess.

Yvonne Ridley is a journalist with Al Jazeera

DEMONSTRATION SPECIAL

LOSING THE WAR AT HOME

Media buries truth

David Edwards *is the co-editor of the MediaLens website. He spoke to Socialist Worker about the role of the media during and after the war on Iraq*

WHAT WAS staggering before the war was how the media failed to ask even obvious questions about US and UK government claims about Iraq and weapons of mass destruction.

Scott Ritter, the chief weapons inspector, claimed that by December 1998 Iraq had been “90-95 percent”, that is “fundamentally”, disarmed.

That was one thing almost never discussed. Another was that when the inspectors left Iraq in December 1998 they were pulled out by the UN.

Yet Tony Blair, Jack Straw and the rest of them said the inspectors were kicked out. And they were almost never challenged by the media, who parroted that same line.

Fairness and Action in Reporting in the US took ten examples from different media in 1998, where they all said the inspectors had been withdrawn. They then checked in 2002 and 2003, and the same outlets, like the Washington Post, said they’d been kicked out.

During the war things became even worse because of an agreement that while troops are under fire it’s our patriotic duty to support them.

All political and journalistic dissent dried up. The only people who were reporting honestly were people like Robert Fisk and John Pilger.

The media basically supported the war. There was minimal coverage of the destruction to Iraqi civilian society.

There were endless mentions of the way that Saddam Hussein had run down society, and that things were chaotic because of his abuse of power. There’s truth in this.

But there was no mention of the role of our sanctions in killing one million Iraqis. These sanctions were declared genocidal by Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, the UN’s humanitarian coordinators in Baghdad.

What’s been amazing for me is the coverage of the situation of civilians

since the war ended. The week after Baghdad fell the Red Cross reported that 32 out of 35 hospitals in Baghdad had shut down because of looting and violence.

There was no mention of what happened next. In May it came out that Umm Qasr had one hospital with 12 beds catering for 45,000 people with no painkillers. That wasn’t covered in the press.

Robert Fisk estimated two weeks ago that about 1,000 Iraqi civilians are being killed every week. And yet on the BBC news, correspondent Ben Brown talked happily of a “consumer boom” in Iraq.

We’re getting tiny mentions of the suffering. The reality of what we’ve done to Iraq, and Afghanistan, is being completely buried.

The media is of the establishment, and serves the establishment. The chairman of the BBC, Gavyn Davies, is close friends with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

He was chief economist at Goldman Sachs. He’s estimated to be worth about £150 million.

You have big business moguls in the corporate media, and you have got government appointees in the public service media like the BBC.

There are all these pressures from the government, big business and advertising.

The Cardiff University Report said in July that “the BBC displayed the most pro-war agenda of any broadcaster.

“Over the three weeks of conflict 11 percent of the sources quoted by the BBC were of coalition, government or military origin, the highest proportion of all the main television broadcasters.”

Andrew Burgin, the press officer of the Stop the War Coalition, said, “Representatives of the Coalition have been invited to appear on every TV channel except the BBC.”

MediaLens tries to compare the corporate media’s version of events with authoritative opinion and sources we feel have been neglected.

We’ll analyse an article in the Guardian, show what they’re ignoring, and argue against their version. We’ll send our arguments to the journalist and invite them to reply.

We want to encourage people to challenge powerful people in the media and politics.

Sign up for free media alerts at www.medialens.org

HOW OUR ANTI-WAR PROTESTS ROCKED BLAIR

Not since the 1970s has extra-parliamentary activity had such an impact on British politics

TONY BLAIR likes to give the impression that widespread anti-war opposition across Britain has not swayed his government’s actions. The facts show this is a lie.

The Hutton inquiry into the death of Dr David Kelly has exposed how Blair’s obsession with undermining anti-war resistance has driven every twist and turn in recent British politics.

This has happened on three marked occasions in the past 12 months. Blair travelled to the US to meet George Bush on 8 September 2002. Blair secretly pledged to join Bush’s war on Iraq come what may.

But the growing opposition to war posed a huge problem.

Just two days later the TUC congress in Blackpool saw an electric debate. Union leaders and delegates slammed into Blair’s war plans. Opinion polls also showed most people were either against or had grave doubts over war on Iraq.

That opposition was finding a focus in the mobilisation for an anti-war demonstration on 28 September. “We can expect a torrent of lies from the government to try and win support for war,” warned Socialist Worker in the week before that demonstration.

That is exactly what happened.

Blair rushed out his dossier for 24 September. The wording and production of that document is what

Hutton is now investigating.

The Hutton inquiry has revealed that people at the heart of government had grave doubts about the dossier’s claims.

Blair’s chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, had written an e-mail on 17 September to Britain’s spy chief, John Scarlett, and Blair’s right hand man, Alastair Campbell.

Powell warned that the dossier’s first draft “did nothing to demonstrate a threat, let alone an imminent threat” from Iraq to its “neighbours, let alone the West”.

He underlined the point, saying, “We do not have evidence that he [Saddam] is an imminent threat.”

Alastair Campbell e-mailed Powell, “Re dossier: substantial rewrite. Structure as per TB’s [Tony Blair’s] discussion.”

The final dossier contained all the now infamous lies.

These include the claim that Iraq could launch biological and chemical weapons in 45 minutes, that Iraq had tried to buy uranium from an African country, and that Iraq had missiles which could hit British bases in Cyprus.

Blair desperately hoped the dossier would blunt opposition to war. But four days after the dossier was published 400,000 people joined the anti-war march through London on Saturday 28 September.

Two days later delegates at Labour’s conference came close to

backing a hard anti-war motion. They did pass one which called on Blair not to go to war without working through the United Nations.

Powell referred to Blair’s claim in the September dossier that Iraq was trying to obtain uranium. Yet at the time even the CIA said this claim was false and based on forged documents.

Blair produced yet another dossier in Britain claiming to show Iraq posed a threat. Within days it was revealed that whole chunks had simply been copied from a student’s thesis written over ten years ago.

It quickly became known as the “dodgy dossier” in the media, and government ministers were forced to distance themselves from it.

On 15 February the biggest demonstration in British history took place as two million marched in London against the war. It was also the biggest day of global protest in world history.

That march, and the countless protests and rallies in towns and cities across Britain, stoked the rows inside the establishment.

It led to two big parliamentary rebellions, the resignation of Robin Cook, and to even Jack Straw questioning what the government was doing.

Killer blow

Even after the war started on 20 March the resistance continued.

Thousands of school students walked out of school to join anti-

war protests.

On 22 March half a million people demonstrated through London in the biggest ever demonstration in Britain against a war that had started.

Blair had assumed that the anti-war movement would disappear once Saddam Hussein was gone.

In reality the anti-war movement kept protesting, harassing and probing. This ensured that the questions about weapons of mass destruction kept coming up again and again.

This is what lies behind the political explosion of the David Kelly case.

On 29 May BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan made his now famous broadcast, based on talking to Dr Kelly, about the doubts over Blair’s dossier claims on Iraqi weapons. Blair thought salvation had come when the next day US forces seized two lorries with canvas sides in Iraq.

“Those who say we haven’t found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons—they’re wrong. We found them!” declared Bush.

Blair seized on what he hoped would be the killer blow to the anti-war opposition.

“We have already found two trailers, both of which we believe were used for the production of biological weapons,” he said on the eve of a speech to British troops in Iraq.

Opinion polls showed the majority did not support Bush and Blair’s war on Iraq. One third of people were against a war on any basis, even if the UN backed it.

The anti-war movement was mushrooming across Britain to mobilise for the 15 February anti-war march.

And on 18 January some 300,000 people joined an anti-war march in the US capital, Washington, and hundreds of thousands joined marches around the world.

Blair was also forced to recall British ambassadors from across the world for what the press described as an “unprecedented” crisis meeting to discuss tackling the anti-war opposition.

It came as little surprise that in early February US Secretary of State Colin Powell produced a series

of tapes and photographs at the UN supposed to show Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

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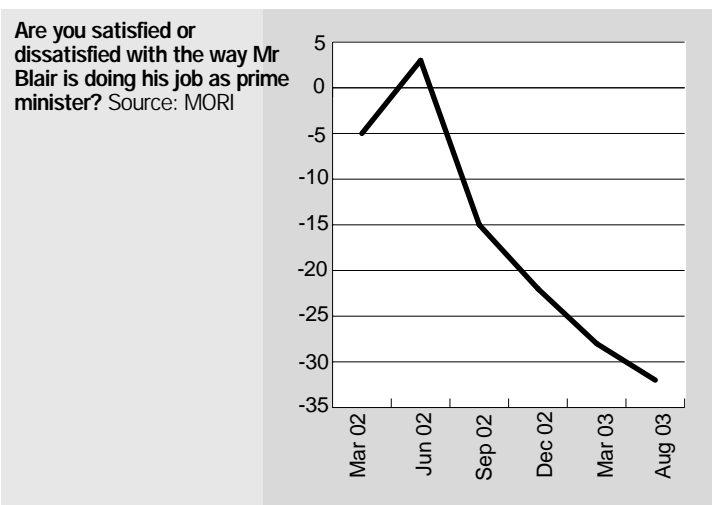
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“We have already found two trailers, both of which we believe were used for the production of biological weapons,” he said on the eve of a speech to British troops in Iraq.



The Observer reported that during his tour “Blair repeatedly briefed journalists that the trailers were germ production labs which proved that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.”

A week later the Observer blew the claim out of the water.

The paper quoted “a British scientist and biological weapons expert who had examined the trailers in Iraq”.

The expert said, “They are not mobile germ warfare laboratories. You could not use them for making biological weapons. They do not even look like them.”

The expert was Dr David Kelly. The government was incensed,

and top Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office officials launched a witch-hunt to unearth the Observer’s expert.

Anti-war opposition has torn into the government and establishment, fuelling and then exposing all their rows and splits.

Now talk in the media from government sources is about how soon Blair will be forced out of Downing Street.

The anti-war movement succeeded in hounding Blair at every turn.

Continuing to mobilise that opposition can challenge Bush’s war drive and make Blair pay for his loyal support.

A UN occupation of Iraq won’t be more peaceful

In the Middle East the United Nations is not seen as positive force for good

INTENSE negotiations are taking place at the United Nations Security Council about the possibility of the UN taking responsibility for running Iraq.

Many people, disgusted by the US and Britain’s role, feel that it would be a good move for the UN to take over.

But in reality the plans are based upon UN troops being used to bolster the US occupation and to assist the US in its new war in Iraq.

Bush might choose to have some blue-helmeted UN forces do some of the fighting and dying for him. But he does not want to surrender real control.

The UN is not a neutral force, as the people of Iraq and the Middle East know only too well.

Denis Halliday, the former UN coordinator of humanitarian aid for Iraq, said after the bombing of the UN compound in Iraq last month: “Maybe some of us here try to envisage the UN in a benign light—as a positive force for good in the world.

“In the Middle East this simply is not the perception that most people have.

“In terms of Israel and Palestine, the UN is seen as an instrument of the US, and negligent of the resolutions that have been passed but neglected by Israel.

“The UN is seen as responsible for neglecting the Palestinians, failing to put in peacekeeping forces between Israel and the Palestinians.

“In regard to Iraq, it’s even more immediate in that it was the UN that sustained sanctions on the Iraqi people for 13 years.

“The UN has failed the Iraqi people. It has committed genocide in Iraq for many years, in keeping with the definition of genocide in the UN convention on genocide.

“The other issue in Iraq is the collaboration between the UN and the US in the country.

“Given the fact that the aggression, invasion and occupation of Iraq is illegal, outside international law, incompatible with the UN charter and not approved by the Security Council, any collaboration between the UN and the US in Iraq is wrong.

In Afghanistan a mother feeds her children grass soup following the UN-sponsored war

“There wasn’t a family in Iraq that wasn’t hurt by the sanctions.

“Many, if not all, families lost a child, cousin, father or mother prematurely and unnecessarily from bad water, lack of healthcare—all of the problems that the sanctions brought and sustained in Iraq for the last 13 years.”

The 1991 Gulf War against Iraq took place with UN backing after the most blatant manipulation, bribery and bullying of UN members by the US.

The UN-authorised occupation of Afghanistan has brought chaos for the Afghan people. It is stoking up the conditions for ethnic conflict by playing different groups off against each other.

Soldiers from 31 different countries control Afghanistan. There is no democracy. Power lies with the warlords, who the occupying forces back up.

The UN has always been little more than a tool of the Great Powers that have dominated it since its birth in 1945.

The US, Britain, France, Russia and China have permanent seats on the Security Council, and can veto resolutions or authorise military power.

Russia has carried out a brutal war against Chechnya with no real criticism from the UN. China is repressing Muslims in its north west, claiming it is fighting a “war on terror”.

The US uses the UN when it regards it as useful for its imperialist aims. It was useful in 1991 to attack Iraq with a big coalition of states and UN support.

But when that was not possible—such as in the war against Serbia in 1999—the US used NATO. At other

times, as with the latest war on Iraq, the US will assemble a “coalition of the willing” (more accurately a “coalition of the killing”) to carry out attacks.

UN troops will still mean a foreign power continuing to dominate another people’s country, with all the repression and horror that brings.

The US, with its massive power at the UN, will still exert control over the occupation.

The only solution that can bring peace and democracy to the Iraqi people is if they can take control of their own society.

As Denis Halliday says, “The Iraqis will want massive capital assistance to rebuild the damage of the first Gulf War, the second Gulf War and the 13 years of sanctions.

“They’re going to need tremendous assistance, but they must determine who does that, how and when.”

US plans to send UN troops into Iraq are a cynical attempt by a section of the Bush regime to get out of the mess they have created.

George Bush wants to force through a UN resolution that will leave the US in political control of Iraq but have other states policing the country under the banner of the UN.

Some in the US want to free up forces so they can threaten more wars against other “rogue states”, like Iran, Syria, North Korea and others.

A UN occupation would not be a more peaceful, democratic alternative to Iraq today.

To create that all foreign troops, whether they are UN or US dominated, and the colonial overlords that run Iraq, must get out as soon as possible.

Picture: Richard Scarrye

► troops to border with South Korea. Rumsfeld warns Iran, claiming it is developing nuclear weapons.	Iraqis after opening fire on what they call a “terrorist training camp” near Rawa in central Iraq.	21 June An echo of Vietnam as US troops copy a scene from the film Apocalypse Now by playing Wagner’s Ride of the Valkyries as they smash homes in Ramadi, western Iraq.	24 June Six British soldiers killed in Majar al-Kabir after the soldiers had shot dead five civilians.	wants to deport Iraqis, as the country is “safe”.	18 July Dr David Kelly’s dead body is discovered.	8 August US troops in Baghdad are now killing an Iraqi almost every day. A father and three children are shot dead as their car is targeted at a US checkpoint.	11 August Hutton inquiry into Dr David Kelly’s death begins in Britain.	27 August Latest toll of journalists killed in Iraq is 17. Most have been killed by US forces.	people in Britain oppose the occupation of Iraq.	every month.	approval in April.	13 September The total number of Iraqis being held without trial in Iraq is now 5,500.	there is no conclusive proof that weapons of mass destruction exist in Iraq.
12 June US troops kill at least 70	15 June 10,000 protest in British-controlled Basra.		5 July Home Office announces it	15 July US has already spent \$48 billion on war. New Labour says it is spending £5 million per day.	27 July 11 killed when US forces open fire on a crowded street in Baghdad.		19 August Bomb attack on UN compound in Iraq.	1 September Poll shows 61 percent of	8 September Pentagon admits the US is spending \$3.9 billion in Iraq and just under \$1 billion in Afghanistan	10 September 150,000 US troops in Iraq. CNN/USA Today opinion poll only gives Bush a 52 percent approval rating, down from 71 percent	12 September US troops shoot dead ten policemen outside Fallujah. US dead to date in Iraq is 295.	17 September Hans Blix, former UN weapons inspector, says	Death toll sources: www.iraqbodycount.net http://funaville.org/warcasualties/Summary.aspx

DEMONSTRATION SPECIAL

MIDDLE EAST

Dr Ilan Pappé, a prominent Israeli anti-Zionist, spoke to Socialist Worker

THE INTIFADA has brought both societies to the verge of another clash. This exposes the real issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

It is the outburst of an almost fatal illness that has been treated with aspirins. People have to confront the real issues.

There are three levels to this.

The first is that all the peace processes, including Oslo, were attempts to circumvent the heart of the matter—the Palestinian refugees. The second intifada broke out because there was no tangible solution for the refugees.

The second is, what is Israel going to do in its treatment of the Occupied Territories?

It wants to avoid a full and unconditional withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.

It wants to avoid a comprehensive Palestinian state. It can't get away with this.

Its talk of peace raises hopes—especially that of those living under occupation.

But the powers, the US and Israel, don't mean it. When people understand they have been misled, something triggers a tide of frustration that turns into an uprising.

This time it was Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The first intifada it was a road accident.

The third level is new—the spilling over of the uprising into Israel itself. This irreversibly changed relations between Jews and Palestinians.

Israel is a semi-apartheid state. It discriminates against the Palestinians living within it. The new generation do not want to tolerate this.

It could lead to terrible bloodshed, but could also lead Israelis to rethink the whole ideology of the Jewish state.

I think the coming months are going to be more of the same, and much worse.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel—in Britain and the US.

Bush and Blair have had it after their war on Iraq. Their end will affect the Middle East.

It will take more than a US peace initiative and soft pressure on Israel.

To topple Israel we need the same strategy that dismantled apartheid in South Africa.

Palestinians face Israeli terror on a daily basis

'Palestine is like a prison'

This Sunday is the third anniversary of the start of the Palestinian intifada. Socialist Worker spoke to Palestinians living in the West Bank

MOHAMMED

'IN A small city called Hebron there are 500 Israeli soldiers protecting a small number of extremist Israeli settlers. The Palestinians are forced to stay in their homes. The Israelis are putting all the Palestinians under curfew. It lasts all day.

There are hundreds of checkpoints throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Israel is killing people daily. Yesterday in the Khalandiya refugee camp between Jerusalem and Ramallah, Israel killed a 13 year old boy.

His one mistake was he got too close to the apartheid wall that the Israelis are building round the West Bank.

Every day we are losing kids, women, old people, sons, daughters. Palestinians have a terrible unemployment rate. People can't find jobs. If they do, they are on low salaries. Prices are increasing.

The intifada began because Palestinians refused to live under this situation.

Israel is putting three million people in a big jail, the biggest in the world.

The US road map plan is about Israel delivering the minimum

possible for the Palestinians to make the situation quiet. Israel refused to implement it.

Palestinians need liberation. We will not stop our intifada until we have freedom.'

ASHRAP

'THE ISRAELI closures mean people cannot move. People face humiliation every day at Israeli checkpoints.

People have to walk over hills to get to work. I did this every day for two years. It is very risky, as the Israelis have soldiers in high places who shoot people.

'We are in for many more years of turmoil'

'AT LEAST since World War Two, American strategic interests in the Middle East have been, first, to ensure supplies of oil and, second, to guarantee at enormous cost the strength and domination of Israel over its neighbours.

Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires—that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate.

If anyone needs to go to hospital it is difficult for an ambulance to reach them. People die.

Palestinians living in different cities cannot see each other. It has become a joke, that it is like living in different countries.

Israel's latest invention is the separation wall around the West Bank. It will divide Palestinians from each other.

Palestine is like a big prison, with all these small prisons inside. The situation in the Middle East is very angry after the occupation of Iraq.

People oppose the US and

Israeli attempts to impose a new leader on us. That's why people who opposed Arafat joined demonstrations supporting him.

The intifada shows the Palestinians' spirit of resistance, our refusal to accept the occupation.

When you see Israeli F-16s hitting Palestinian villages and cities every day, how can you condemn suicide bombers as "terrorists"?

Give the Palestinians F-16s and they will fight with them. Give us Apache helicopters.

Israel has the most technologically advanced US and British

tanks. What are the Palestinians supposed to do? Suicide bombing is something you need to understand in context. It is not terrorism but a mechanism of resistance. It comes from a people who are living in a shit situation with nothing to lose.

When a Palestinian kid dies no one mentions it. When an Israeli dies it is an earthquake around the world.

What is happening in Palestine is part of the international movement. People should show solidarity with those resisting imperialism.'

tell the truth and fundamentally murderous. Since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, there has been an uninterrupted imperial presence based on these premisses throughout the Arab world.

We are in for many more years of turmoil and misery in the Middle East, where one of the main problems is, to put it plainly, US power.' EDWARD SAID

Three years of the intifada
September 2000
Israeli war criminal Ariel Sharon desecrates the Muslim Al-Aqsa holy site

in Jerusalem by marching in with 1,000 security guards to demonstrate Israeli superiority. Triggers the intifada.
Thousands of Palestinians take to the streets. Israel launches a

brutal clampdown. Israeli soldiers kill 12 year old Mohammed Al Doura.
October 2000
Israel imposes the most severe restrictions on

movement throughout the Occupied Territories since 1967.
Palestinians living in Israel launch a general strike and protest. Israeli soldiers kill 141 Palestinians.

December 2000
Israel has killed 332 Palestinians in three months.
January 2001
First Palestinian suicide bombing since the

beginning of the intifada.
February 2001
Ariel Sharon elected prime minister of Israel.
April-August 2001
Israel kills 235

Palestinians.
September 2001
Israel uses excuse of 11 September to launch incursions into Palestinian areas. Rate of killing of Palestinians doubles. ►

AGAINST THE US EMPIRE

Anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism & revolution

Millions have joined the global protests against war and against capitalist globalisation. How can we fuse these struggles to change the world, asks **Alex Callinicos**

THE anti-war protests around the world this weekend are another step in the development of a genuinely global movement of resistance to the present rulers of the world. Many protesters recognise that the problem goes much deeper than George W Bush and Tony Blair. Some liberals may look back nostalgically to the presidency of Bill Clinton. But General Wesley Clark, the Democratic presidential candidate closest to him, commanded the NATO forces that bombed Yugoslavia into submission on Clinton’s orders in 1999.

Moreover, the domination of the world by a few big bullies takes different forms. A fortnight ago the World Trade Organisation (WTO) conference at Cancun in Mexico collapsed in disarray.

This happened because the two greatest economic powers in the world—the United States and the European Union—went too far in trying to force the poor countries of the South to open up their economies even more to the great corporations of the North.

The failure of these efforts was a major defeat for neo-liberalism—the free market policies that institutions such as the WTO, International Monetary Fund and World Bank have sought to impose globally on behalf of the rich countries.

Many activists now recognise the connections between different issues. To see American corporations like Bechtel and Halliburton get contracts to rebuild Iraq even before the Pentagon started knocking it down is worth dozens of lectures on imperialism.

Constantly restructuring These connections stem from the fact that we all live under the same world system—capitalism. The main driving force of capitalism is economic—the search for profits. The source of these profits comes from the labour of nearly a billion wage labourers worldwide.

The system is constantly restructuring itself in order to find the best opportunities to exploit these workers. For example, in the past few years Western multinationals have been pouring investment into China to profit from its vast workforce.

Capitalism is driven also by competition. The capitalists struggle among themselves for the greatest possible share of the loot that they have collectively squeezed out of the workers. Despite uniting to impose neo-

liberalism on the Third World and on the countries of the old Eastern Bloc, the US and the EU continually clash over trade.

This competition isn’t just economic. By the beginning of the 20th century the world was dominated by a handful of capitalist powers whose economic rivalries became interwoven with the struggle for global political and military domination.

This is what Karl Marx’s intellectual heirs a century ago called imperialism. Giant corporations, in their search for markets and investment, had become dependent on the military power of their respective states.

Out of these struggles came first the appalling destruction inflicted on humankind during the two world wars, and then the carnage and waste caused by the long Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

At the start of the Cold War George Kennan of the US State Department wrote, “We have about 50 percent of the world’s

wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this disparity without positive detriment to our national security.”

‘Peer competitor’ This remains the task of America’s rulers today. The US emerged from the Cold War as the dominant imperialist power. But the neo-conservatives who help shape the Bush administration’s global policy fear this “hegemony” will not last.

The US is militarily unchallenged, but it faces economic rivals such as the EU and Japan. China’s rapidly expanding economy may one day allow it to challenge the US as a “peer competitor” for regional or even global domination.

The Bush administration has gambled on asserting US military power to intimidate the rest

of the world into submission. But it looks as if this gamble may not pay off.

In Iraq the Anglo-American occupying army is becoming bogged down in the face of growing armed resistance. Even the compliant American media and political establishment are beginning to utter the dread word “Vietnam”.

Moreover, the war in Iraq has widened the divisions among the leading capitalist powers—France and Germany versus the US and Britain. These divisions encouraged Third World governments to resist the demands of the US and the EU in Cancun.

The Filipino activist and intellectual Walden Bello is quite right to say that neo-liberal capitalism is experiencing a growing “crisis of legitimacy”. But how do resistance movements take advantage of this crisis?

Some believe that we can find allies among the world’s rulers. Leading anti-capitalist intellectuals such as George Monbiot

and Bernard Cassen argue for building up the EU as a counterweight to the US. But the EU is one of the driving forces behind neo-liberalism. At Cancun Pascal Lamy, the European trade commissioner, was even more vicious in his demands from the Third World than his US counterpart, Robert Zoellick.

Building up the EU as a military power, as the French and German governments now propose, might unleash an arms race that, like the Cold War, could threaten to wipe out humanity.

We need to be similarly cautious about the governments of powerful Third World states such as Brazil, India and South Africa that led the opposition at Cancun. All of them are pushing through neo-liberal policies domestically, while India is ruled by extreme right wing Hindu chauvinists.

More fundamentally, the basic problem is the system. Rather than back one gang of the thieves and murderers who rule the world against another, we need to

get rid of capitalism. We need a revolution.

“Revolution” is a word that frightens many people. It conjures up images of violence. But the main source of violence really involved in revolutions is that of counter-revolution.

History shows that the rich and powerful will ruthlessly fight to defend their privileges. The most recent example is the “other 11 September”—Chile 1973, when a military coup overthrew President Salvador Allende.

The example of the Bush administration shows beyond any doubt the determination of the rich to rule by force. But there is a counter to their power.

After the global day of anti-war protest on 15 February, the New York Times announced that this movement marked the emergence of a “second superpower”.

Connecting battles The present anti-war movement is unprecedented in its scale and global reach. It is also marked by a growing consciousness of the convergence between resistance to war and the movement against global capitalism that began at Seattle in 1999.

Reflecting this consciousness, the European Social Forum will bring tens of thousands together in Paris in November.

Of course, the movement didn’t stop Bush and Blair from conquering Iraq. It hasn’t ended the occupation—though there is a chance that, in combination with resistance in Iraq, it will.

The movement’s fundamental weakness so far is that it has failed really to mobilise the strength of the organised working class. Because capitalist exploitation consists in the labour of workers, they have the power collectively to paralyse it and even to bring it to an end.

So far we have had only glimpses of what this could mean—in the presence of trade union contingents on the great anti-capitalist and anti-war protests, and in the strikes and workplace protests that greeted the invasion of Iraq in March.

One reason why the movement needs organised socialists is to connect the broader movement against neo-liberalism with the daily battles of workers against their exploitation.

When these two struggles fuse into a single onslaught against the system, we won’t just say, “Another world is possible.” We’ll make that world for real.

Burning the Stars and Stripes while protesting at this month’s WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico

Picture: PA Photos

► October 2001 Israel reoccupies five Palestinian towns after the assassination of an extremist cabinet minister.	against Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank. Israeli troops kill 180 Palestinians in two weeks.	West Bank. Almost 260 Palestinians killed. Jenin refugee camp under siege—“horrific beyond belief”, says UN special envoy. Israel puts Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat under	siege in his Ramallah compound.	September 2002-March 2003 Israel kills 515 Palestinians.	incursion into Gaza, killing 13 Palestinians. US and Israel say Arafat must go. Mahmoud Abbas made Palestinian prime minister.	2,168 Palestinians since the intifada. Mahmoud Abbas resigns as prime minister. Israeli leaders threaten to kill or exile Yasser Arafat.
February-March 2002 Sharon launches attacks	March-May 2002 Israeli tanks invade most of the major towns in the		June 2002 Israeli launches another invasion of the West Bank. Completely reoccupies Palestinian areas.	May 2003 US “road map for peace” officially launched. Within hours Israel launches	September 2003 Israel has killed at least	Casualty figures: www.palestinemonitor.org

DEMONSTRATION SPECIAL

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

Marching in London? Then head for Paris

In seven weeks time anti-war activists, campaigners against corporate globalisation, trade unionists and many more from across Europe will converge on Paris

PEOPLE WILL be heading for the French capital in November to take part in the second European Social Forum (ESF).

The first ESF was in the Italian city of Florence last November, when 60,000 people took part in three days of rallies, debates and forums.

The Florence forum culminated in a million-strong demonstration against war.

And it was out of meetings at Florence that activists from across Europe called for massive anti-war protests on 15 February this year.

The Paris forum will be a similar mix of rallies, debates and demonstrations to Florence.

People will be travelling from as far as Seville in southern Spain, Greece, Turkey, Sweden and Poland.

The Global Mobilisation Network expects to get 2,000 people

from Barcelona, northern Spain, to Paris.

The Initiative for a Social Forum expect 3,000 people to go from Germany—twice the number who went to Florence from Germany.

There they will be part of huge meetings on themes such as opposition to war, privatisation and environmental destruction. There will also be hundreds of smaller meetings.

Adding to the feeling will be the massive presence of activists who were at the heart of the huge strikes which rocked France earlier this year.

The Paris ESF will culminate in a mass demonstration on Saturday 15 November. Anyone who can should try to get to the European Social Forum.

A special charter train is running from Britain, leaving London on Wednesday 12 No-

vember and returning on Sunday 15 November.

If you can't get there for the whole forum you can, of course, go for part of it and for the demonstration.

There are plenty of ways to get to Paris for one or more days at a reasonable cost.

Don't delay. Book your place. Get your union branch, anti-war group, campaign or organisation to send as many delegates as possible, and organise to raise money.

And don't forget to bring your banner for the giant demonstration against war and corporate globalisation in Paris on Saturday 15 November.

For full details of the ESF programme, registration, accommodation and transport—including the special train from Britain—go to www.mobilise.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2072.

French trade unionists have been involved in major battles Picture: Jess Hurd/www.reportdigital.co.uk

'The ESF can strengthen the links between activists across any borders'

OLIVIER BESANCENOT is the young postal worker who shocked the French establishment when he won 1.2 million votes standing as a revolutionary socialist in the presidential election in April last year.

One in seven of the people under 25 who voted backed Olivier.

He is a leading member of the socialist Revolutionary Communist League. He spoke to Socialist Worker about the build-up in France towards the European Social Forum.

Olivier Besancenot

"The ESF will be a major event," says Olivier. "Trade union activists, NGOs and political parties from the left, coming from all

over Europe, will discuss the consequences of corporate globalisation, as well as alternative models of society and how to get it.

"It will also be a new opportunity for debate on different conceptions of relationships between social movements and political parties.

"The real divide should be between a neo-liberal and reformist 'left' on one side, and the radical and anti-capitalist left on the other.

"The ESF will be about deepening the connections between the anti-capitalist movement and social questions globally, and in relation to the European Union."

There is already a major mobilisation under way in France for the ESF. "Meetings have taken place to build for it in towns across the country," says Olivier.

"Gathering thousands of people from other countries, especially from European countries, is one of the most important challenges the ESF faces.

"The ESF will offer a great opportunity to strengthen links between fighting sectors of the working class and youth, beyond any borders.

"The ESF in Florence was the beginning of the building of a huge anti-war movement.

"All of us know that the anti-war movement has been very powerful in Britain.

"So the attendance of British activists will help to have interesting debates about that experience.

"The forum will be a theatre for political debate between the

different currents that exist inside the anti-globalisation movement."

There will be a mass demonstration on the final day of the forum, on 15 November. Olivier says, "That demonstration is of course one more reason to come in numbers to Paris."

The forum is taking place against the backdrop of huge strikes and demonstrations over attacks on pensions in France earlier this year.

"The protest movement in early summer was even more powerful than the one we had with the public sector workers' strikes in November and December 1995," says Olivier.

"It was not, however, powerful enough to force the

right wing government to abandon its pensions project.

"But then 300,000 people gathered in Larzac in the south of France in solidarity with José Bové, the spokesman of the Peasant Confederation, and against the World Trade Organisation summit in Cancun.

"Also during the heatwave over the summer several thousand elderly people died just because there was not enough room in hospitals.

"The lack of legitimacy of the right wing government is more obvious than ever.

"This can lead to new social disputes, although nobody can really predict where and when, and what the topic of movements will be."



Travel with the English Mobilisation for the ESF on our Eurostar train to Paris

Don't miss out... Book now!

Tickets cost between £89 and £125 (depending on income) and include return Eurostar train ticket from London to Paris, individual ESF registration fee and accommodation space (bring your own sleeping bag)

Phone now on 020 7053 2072 or go to www.mobilise.org.uk

in my view

I'm Brownd off at hopes of Gordon

WHAT ELSE can Gordon Brown do to convince us not to look to him as an alternative to Blair?

At the TUC conference he was surrounded by bureaucrats who are desperate to have Comrade Brown as their dear leader.

Brown gave the progressive elements a stern telling off for suggesting that society could be made any better through the Labour Party.

"I tell you honestly there can be no retreat from a pro-enterprise, pro-industry agenda," he said.

To spout this sort of nonsense to his target audience is rather poorly spun, to be honest. Just as well for him that many on the bureaucratic left are falling for it.

To me, it's reminiscent of that thief from The Fast Show—"Nah, nah, you don't understand, I'll sell you out! You put me in Number 10 and I'll privatise it! Cannot trust me, mate.

"I'm a bit woarr, a little bit waaaaayyy, bit of a Tory, know what I mean?"

If only the cabinet and George Bush were as easily satisfied as some of the union leaders—"OK Saddam, we want the immediate, unequivocal surrender of all your weaponry.

"We want you to stand down as leader and hand yourself over. We want your oil, your people and your land. But failing all that, a polite letter of apology will suffice."

So we have a Labour Party leadership that is united in its boast to core supporters that it doesn't like them very much.

It is also about to get bitten by the toothless Hutton inquiry which they thought would distract people from the real issues around the war, and its idea of a post-spin era has Peter Mandelson appointed to oversee it!

Asking for little

How can these ingredients give us the party we deserve?

I recently wrote a letter to Peter Hain. I told him that we were onto him, and that Blair was a jerk and that Bush was an ape, and the usual stuff you find in letters where every paragraph starts with, "And another thing!"

I didn't do it because I thought it would change him—I just did it to piss him off.

The letter he wrote back to me, however, thanked me for "raising important points in a humorous way."

He then wished me luck and said that I would think they'd done a good job "when the dust settles".

None of Blair's cronies have any idea what ordinary people want because they think ordinary people are those who own the newspapers and arms companies.

The way Hain read my terrible bile-spitting tangle of a letter is exactly the same way the cabinet read public opinion before they get stunned into submission by a huge demonstration or a strike.

Calling for Brown to replace Blair is asking for little and ultimately getting even less.

Don't get me wrong. There were some healthy threats directed at the Blairites from this TUC conference.

But if the movement really wants a government based on the principles of equality, wealth redistribution and peace, they should be standing up in strikes, occupations and demonstrations on a massive scale.

We shouldn't simply be conning people into thinking that the Brown they're seeing has shades of red.

PATRICK WARD

REVIEWS

Music Dizzee Rascal won the Mercury Music Prize but there's a lot more underground, says Paracat from The Unpeople

BEAT FROM THE STREETS

WHEN 18 year old working class garage MC Dizzee Rascal picked up the Mercury Music Prize I was pleased, but something bugged me.

It had nothing to do with his oversimplistic beats or the lack of content in his lyrics. I quite like his voice and style of flow.

What irritated me was that Mr Rascal was seen as the pinnacle of innovation.

Maybe he is innovative in the eyes of the Top of the Pops audience. But in the UK underground music scene there are many artists as good as and much better than Dizzee.

One scene full to the brim of ability, content and innovation is the UK hip-hop scene. Untouched by major labels, the music is left to ferment in its own time, and is more personal and real.

It's like GM foods—when you start to produce foods just for profit, taste and goodness suffer.

So some urban commercial music imitates US accents and promotes a fake lifestyle of diamonds, flash cars and guns—known as the "bling bling" culture.

I was amazed when I first got into the UK hip-hop scene at how political the music is.

Life, one third of Phi Life Cypher, has just released his debut album Everyday Life, featuring tracks about Stephen Lawrence, inner city life and the discontent with the system.

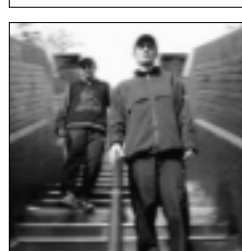
Another group, Task Force, hails from the Highbury estate and has cult status in the UK hip-hop underground scene.

Their albums, Music from the Corner, Voice of the Great Outdoors, and New Mic Order, are all lyrical masterpieces.

Streetwise, talented and very intelligent, this group should have picked up the Mercury Music Prize long ago. But lack of funds, publicity and industry



Audiences love new forms of political music—Dizzee Rascal (top right) and Task Force (middle and bottom right)



respect means these guys must be content with their underground status.

Chester P from Task Force states, "I want my hip-hop to be street, underground. So it's gonna reach people like myself. I don't want to reach all these bourgie kind of people.

"I wanna be reaching ghetto yutes, going round their estates an so on. I don't want no fucking suit n tie man in his Porsche playing my shit."

Task Force are signed to Low Life records, one of the biggest independent UK hip-hop labels. Low Life was formed by rapper Braintax.

Braintax and Task Force teamed up on a Rawdog track, "Arrest the President", with an image of a monkey carrying a gun on the cover—any

reference to George Bush, I wonder?

So why is it that groups like Task Force don't get a look in when it comes to awards? UK hip-hop is not as commercially viable as garage is. Ever since major labels got their claws into garage, it has been watered down.

The once respected So Solid Crew have turned into Westlife with hoods. So Solid have been manufactured and marketed to 14 to 16 year olds. The creativity takes a back seat to what sells.

Although the UK hip-hop scene is devoid of money and commercial success, its music is of the purest form. Its artists work freely without restriction.

Commercial success does not necessarily equal diluted music.

The drum & bass scene pulled their music back from the major labels in 1990s. Now drum & bass has gone worldwide and is stronger than ever, with artists exercising control over their music.

Let's hope that in the future the UK hip-hop scene can do the same and become a self built commercial music, but that artists still have their freedom.

Paracat is the MC in The Unpeople.

For more on UK hip-hop go to www.subversive-elements.co.uk www.thecrateestate.co.uk www.musicfromthecorner.com or www.lowliferecords.freemove.co.uk

ROUND-UP

An outlaw hero and a prime minister

TV drama
The Deal

THIS CRACKING film about the power struggle between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown was dropped by ITV as "too sensitive". Luckily Channel 4 are screening it on the eve of Labour's conference.

Like the recent *The Project*, it combines memorable newsreel footage with drama. The actors playing Blair and Brown are scarily true to life, although the Peter Mandelson character never gets close to explaining the man's power.

The film shows how the drive to "modernise" Labour was born out of frustration with years of defeat by the Tories.

It shows how ruthless and calculating Blair and Brown are. There were no real political differences between the two, just differences of background and culture, although Blair was always hated as a Tory interloper.

The film ends with Blair becoming leader in 1994. But film-maker Stephen Frears says he wanted to draw contemporary parallels.

The Deal has a narrow, almost claustrophobic, focus on the Westminster village. It says Blair's time is up, but hints that Brown may be better. The real drama continues.

ROB HOVEMAN

Sunday 28 September, 9pm, Channel 4

Cinema
Ned Kelly

NED KELLY is Australia's most famous bushranger.

This new film shows how Ned tried to live a normal life but was continually set up by the local police, who are portrayed as brutal, corrupt and vengeful.

He only turns to crime for revenge when he is accused of the attempted murder of a policeman.

The police punish Ned's family by poisoning their wells and locking his mother up.

Kelly became a folk hero because his experience with the authorities was like that of so many other poverty-stricken, mainly Irish, people in the colony.

Ned Kelly is beautifully filmed, with long shots of the lush Australian bush.

Director Gregor Jordan also made *Buffalo Soldiers*.

Ned Kelly celebrates a good old fashioned outlaw hero. It is an epic that is perfect for the big screen and is well worth a trip to the cinema.

NIGEL DAVEY

Ned Kelly goes on general release on Friday 26 September



TV

Four to watch this week

THE GREAT WAR

Saturday, 6pm, BBC2

Even if you haven't been following this excellent series on the First World War, make a point of watching this episode. It is now 1917, and the anger among French soldiers at the slaughter turns to revolt.

PANORAMA

Sunday, 10.15pm, BBC1

TV crew follows a platoon of US troops in Iraq over the summer. It may be awful, but equally it may be worth watching.

MUSIC BOX

Thursday, 12.25am, BBC1

Superb film by left wing director Costas Gavras. A courtroom drama with a real sting in the tail, in which a US lawyer defends her Hungarian-born father from charges of being a Nazi war criminal.

THE OFFICE

Wednesday, 10pm, BBC2

A rerun of the comedy series.

Compiled by Paul McGarr

ROYAL MAIL DISPUTE

What happened in the national post ballot?

This industry is vital for our movement, says **Charlie Kimber**

POSTAL WORKERS are facing a crucial few weeks which could determine what happens in the industry for years to come.

Trade unionists in other industries will also be watching developments intently.

Royal Mail managers have gone on the offensive after the shock announcement last week that postal workers had voted by 48,038 to 46,391 against strikes over pay.

The outrageous assault from management provoked unofficial strikes in Oxford, and also forms the backdrop to the strikes over London weighting planned in the capital (see page 12).

Why did the national vote go against strikes?

There is no doubt that in too many areas the campaign was weak, especially when compared to a deluge of propaganda from management.

Some divisional and branch officials, especially some associated with the old regime of former union deputy general secretary John Keggie, are almost genetically incapable of throwing themselves into a campaign for a strike.

There may even have been a few who, to their great shame, wanted to lose the vote to humble Dave Ward, the new union deputy general secretary.

One CWU divisional rep told Socialist Worker, "I know there were some officials who said they

would go through the motions but then not really push the vote because they wanted to clip Dave Ward's wings.

"Then they woke up and found they had set back the union badly and given management a huge boost."

The bosses' paper the Financial Times reported on Friday of last week, "Keggie's friends say that he is 'pleased' with events."

Bosses' dire warnings

John Farnan, the CWU divisional rep for Anglia, told Socialist Worker, "I think in some places people were complacent.

"Not enough was done, and at times it felt our material was tailing after Royal Mail's rather than defining our own agenda.

"For me it's part of the problem of the way the union is centralised and not enough power is at a local level."

The vote doesn't just reflect the actions of a few useless officials.

The defeat of the firefighters affected the mood in which the ballot took place.

It meant some believed the bosses' dire warnings that the union wouldn't win even if the strikes went on until Christmas.

The union's campaign did not convince enough people about the real power that postal workers have—their capacity to stop 82 million items of mail a day.



Oxford postal workers walked out for the second time on Monday (above). Post vans not moving the mail (below) Picture: Ian McKendrick

Partnership has failed

THE VOTE was also a product of two years of "partnership" with management.

There have been almost no strikes in the post since May 2001, and a virtual no-strike deal followed the Sawyer review of July 2001.

Paul Turnbull, a Cambridge postal worker, says, "The moratorium on strikes has had an effect on the union's organisation. It means that one of the ways that the solidarity links were maintained, one of the ways the union was kept sharp and the activists linked to the members, was allowed to wither.

"The unofficial strikes—most of which won—also gave you a sense of your power, which is very useful when management try to maintain that workers' action does not change anything."

Add to that the last six months' when the union's strategy has been to be prepared to sell thousands of jobs and conditions for a little more cash.



Billy Hayes

It must have confused some people when the union then turned round and said it was going to call a strike against a deal based on this principle.

And last year workers delivered a good majority for strikes in a ballot over pay, and then got a rotten deal and no strikes.

The good thing is that all the factors that meant the vote went down can be addressed and turned round if the union, from top to bottom, throws itself into real resistance now.

This shows need for rank and file organisation

THE VOTE against strikes does not mean that workers are happy with life.

It is just that not enough of them felt confident to fight.

Nor is it true, as some reports have suggested, that management tactics represent some new method of sidelining the union.

It's certainly true that Royal Mail's top boss, Allan Leighton, did try some slick marketing techniques in the campaign. But a more energetic campaign by the whole union would still have defeated him.

Nor has Leighton yet tamed the union's resistance, whatever he would like to pretend.

That is why management has now gone on a ferocious offensive to press home their advantage.

But every activist, in the post and the union movement more generally, needs to understand what has happened.

This setback reinforces the

need to build rank and file organisation in the unions.

Billy Hayes, the CWU leader, is one of the new generation of "awkward squad" union leaders. He has been excellent against the war and in supporting protests against the power of the multinationals. He undoubtedly wanted to see a big yes vote.

But just winning an election to an official position does not mean you have enough people on the ground to win workers

to action.

That requires networks of activists arguing in every office to challenge the bosses' lies, give confidence and raise the militancy of the union.

The official leadership had not done this.

Post Worker, the rank and file paper, has made a great start towards creating these networks. But it was still too weak.

Its sales and organisation have to be developed.

There was also always a big

question mark about how Billy Hayes would deal with the political pressures against a strike from the Labour government. Billy Hayes insists that Labour is still the only party that deserves the union's money.

He fiercely defends staying inside Labour, and brushes aside those who call for building a more left wing alternative.

The firefighters' defeat, the election defeat for Mick Rix in Aslef and now the postal workers' ballot pose questions for the "awkward squad".

Winning elections and hanging on grimly to Labour are not what are needed to revive the strength of the unions.

Billy Hayes must now rise to the challenge. He must stand up to Royal Mail, fan every flame of resistance, and throw the whole union behind the London strikes.

Post Worker meeting

Crunch time for our union

Speakers: Norman Candy, Jane Loftus (CWU national executive personal capacity)

Saturday 4 October, 3.30pm
Lucas Arms, 245A Grays Inn Road,
London WC1 (King's Cross 2/6)

- Solidarity with the post workers
- For a convention of the trade union left

Tuesday 30 September, 7pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (Holborn 6)
Called by the Socialist Alliance

'Now it's time to stand up for ourselves'

'WE ARE still in shock after the result. Postal workers were ringing me up at all hours after the announcement thinking

it was a new strategy from Royal Mail to confuse us.

No, I said, it's true—we lost a great chance to go forward to a better deal and threw that away.

Now they will be coming for all the reps, and anyone who stands

in the way will be challenged.

But there's light at the end of the tunnel—the mood which was seen in Oxford last weekend, and industrial action to come over London weighting.

If we win over this we will boost morale

nationally and show that we're far from a broken force.

It's time now to stand up for ourselves over every issue raised by Royal Mail, and not crumble.'
KENNETH PENFOLD, CWU member, Woodford Green



In brief

Drivers express their anger

STAFF ON the Heathrow Express, which takes passengers from central London to Heathrow airport, have voted in favour of strike action.

The Aslef union plans three 24-hour strikes next month after 41 out of 76 members voted in favour.

They are angry that management has failed to recognise the union and has set up a rival staff association. They are also campaigning for decent pay and against bullying by management.

SATs not the way to do it

MEMBERS OF the NUT teachers' union from south Gloucestershire, north Somerset and Bristol were out campaigning against the excessive testing regime in schools last Saturday.

Hundreds of pupils, teachers and parents signed the petition against SATs at a stall with balloons, speakers and stickers.

A rally against SATs with John Illingworth, a prospective candidate for the leadership of the NUT, and children's author Pat Thompson is due to take place on Wednesday of this week.

PAUL VERNELL

Pay success for ferry workers

WORKERS IN the RMT union at Caledonian MacBrayne's Clyde and Western Isles division have voted by 208 to 50 to accept the company's improved two-year pay and conditions offer.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said, "This settlement shows once more that by standing shoulder to shoulder, we can win improvements in pay and conditions."

Be another brick in wall of sound

THE WALL of Sound are preparing for Saturday's march against the occupation of Iraq. Anyone interested in joining the contingent of drummers and percussionists should meet at the cafe at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park at 11.30am.

Bring along kazoos, whistles, pots, pans and biscuit tins. RED SAUNDERS

Youth Parliament votes for peace

AROUND 50 members of Bradford and Keighley Youth Parliament held a peace walk in Bradford last Sunday to coincide with the global "Peace One Day" activities.

Protesters created a giant peace dove powered by a mini tractor which led their procession through the streets.

The event culminated in a rally in Bradford's Centenary Square with speeches, DJs, poetry and music.

Members of the Youth Parliament explained how, over recent months, they'd discussed the war in Iraq and concluded that they were against all wars. LESLEY MCGORRIGAN

An Ifor for an eye, say GMB members

WORKERS AT the Ifor Williams trailer company are planning further strikes in their nine week long dispute over pay and conditions.

The GMB union conducted a survey of members. They found that a majority of those who replied were in favour of further action. Many supported the idea of an all-out strike.

Shipyards

Tyneside walkout shows how to fight

SOLIDARITY works—that's the clear lesson from Tyneside this week.

Thousands of shipyard workers walked out on strike on Monday of last week in solidarity with 98 sacked workmates. This forced management to reinstate the workers and open talks on pay, the issue that sparked the dispute.

The sacked workers were employed by subcontractor C&D at the Swan Hunter and Amec shipyards on the Tyne. They had seen their wages fall behind those of equivalent workers among the 2,800 directly employed workers at the Tyne yards.

Repeated requests for talks over the issue got nowhere, so the C&D workers staged stoppages. Management sacked the 98 workers.

The sacked workers responded in the best possible way, by picketing the yards on Monday of last week.

In a magnificent display of solidarity the entire workforce at Swan Hunter and at Amec walked out on strike.

The action was unofficial and some union officials denounced it. Fortunately workers in the yards had better instincts than their regional officials.

Within hours a flurry of calls and meetings saw a sudden movement from management.

The C&D workers are rightly cautious about the pay talks, waiting to see the colour



Shipyard workers at Swan Hunter

Picture: Ray Smith

of C&D's money before celebrating victory. But they are also determined to win £11.30 an hour.

Ken Rogan, a sheet metal worker and union steward, says, "We are not going back

to work with our tails between our legs. But we have nothing to celebrate yet. We have two weeks to talk about how, not if, we are getting the £11.30."

There could be wider battles looming on the Tyne.

Amicus elections

ACTIVISTS IN the Amicus union are building support for the Amicus Unity Gazette slate that is standing in upcoming national executive elections.

This is a great opportunity to create a strong union willing to stand up to the bosses and New Labour.

Amicus was formed when the MSF and AEEU unions merged. Groups that put partnership with management and the government above the interests of their members ran these unions.

Gill George, an NHS worker standing for a health service seat on the new executive, told Socialist Worker, "It was the national health service advisory meeting last week.

"John Reid, the health min-

ister, spoke at the conference. He basically said that he didn't care what we wanted. We would get more privatisation and foundation hospitals.

"The people at the top table just sat there like nodding dogs as he talked about this government's renewed assault on the NHS.

"The Unity Gazette slate is out to change this, to bring real democracy into the union and put the interests of the members before those of the Labour Party."

Discredited MSF general secretary Roger Lyons has now given up all his duties. But he will retain his salary of £103,500 until 2007.

Many Amicus members are suffering from the crisis in manufacturing.

Amicus members at the Hydro Aluminium Motorcast factory in Leeds were told last week that bosses were closing the factory.

Thousands of Amicus members were set to demonstrate in defence of manufacturing at the Labour Party conference on Monday of next week.

Amicus Unity Gazette slate candidates will be marching there and campaigning for a fighting union.

Union members should ensure their workplaces and branches nominate candidates and build for the vote in November that could transform the union.

■For a full list of candidates and more information go to www.amicusunitygazette.com

Hydro Aluminium Motorcast

HYDRO ALUMINIUM Motorcast announced last week that it intends to close its Leeds factory.

This will mean a loss of over 600 jobs over the next 15 months.

The Amicus shop stewards have told the workforce at the factory that they intend to fight these proposals by whatever means necessary. The workforce has given us 100 percent support.

At a series of mass meetings the workforce have intimated that they will not give up their jobs without a fight.

The shop stewards at the factory are presently discussing their campaign strategy.

They plan to release the details shortly.

The company makes cylinder heads and blocks for the Ford, General Motors, Saab, Rover and Bentley motor companies.

Norsk Hydro owns Hydro Aluminium Motorcast. The Norwegian government has a 46 percent stake in Norsk Hydro.

The JP Morgan bank owns an additional 16 percent.

Norsk Hydro has additional cylinder head making facilities in Germany and Austria.

These countries have stricter rules in place with regard to plant closures and consultation. The present government has failed to address this by refusing to repeal the anti trade union laws.

Some of our work is to be transferred to Hungary and the Far East to take advantage of low pay and poor health and safety conditions. RAY JONES, Amicus senior shop steward

Nursery nurses

OVER 2,000 nursery nurses from the Unison public sector union took part in a noisy and vibrant demonstration in Edinburgh on Wednesday of last week as part of their fight for decent pay.

Members of the public tooted their car horns, cheered and applauded to demonstrate their support as the march passed them.

Nursery nurses in different areas of Scotland struck on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week.

The nursery nurses are angry that the media are portraying the offer on the table as being £18,000 a year.

In fact it is less than £15,000 once holidays are taken into account.

The employers' body, Cosla, does not have to follow the recommended offer.

Union negotiators, speaking at a rally held after the demonstration, told the nursery nurses that some councils are now moving to introduce local bargaining.

They assured the nursery nurses that Unison would only negotiate at a national level.

They pledged that they would use more strikes to win a decent claim.

ADRIAN CANNON

Hospitals

UP TO 150 school students walked out of Harwich School on Thursday of last week. They organised their strike in support of a campaign against the effective privatisation of health facilities, including the maternity ward, in Harwich, Essex.

One student said, "I was born in this maternity unit and I want to eventually have my children here so I will do all I can to try and stop the closure."

Under the proposed scheme, the land where the local hospital, maternity ward and ambulance station are situated could be sold to property developers. The Unison union has now backed the campaign against the scheme.

School students were inspired to take action following a 400-strong demonstration

last week. They raised the slogan "Health bosses hear us say, NHS is here to stay".

The strike shows that the politicisation of school students following the war has not gone away.

As well as protesting against the health cuts, school students wore "End the occupation of Iraq" and "Free Palestine" stickers publicising the national demonstration. Paris Gardener, one of the students, said, "The stickers are relevant because they have money for war but not to keep our maternity ward open."

Campaigners have also launched a local referendum calling for a new 24-hour publicly funded hospital and plan further demonstrations.

HENNA MALIK and JOHN TIPPLE

Bus workers

NOTTINGHAM BUS drivers have voted to accept the latest pay deal offered by Nottingham City Transport.

The vote was carried by 362 votes for and 208 against. The deal appears to be an improvement on earlier offers, but it will mainly benefit new

recruits.

More longstanding bus drivers will receive a smaller pay increase.

According to one union source there was some bad feeling, but it was felt that the deal had to be accepted.

DAWN MONTIEL

WTO protests

OVER 900 people packed into a World Development Movement meeting in London last Thursday to hear speakers report back from the WTO talks in Cancun.

Prof Yash Tandon, an African delegate to the WTO, gave a perspective from the

inside. The FT had a report saying that poor countries were "likely to be the biggest losers" from the collapse of the talks.

Yash explained how this was completely upside down—no deal was much better than a bad deal.

George Monbiot spoke

Justice for Harry Stanley

IRENE STANLEY, the widow of Harry Stanley, joined campaigners to lay flowers at the site where he died on the fourth anniversary of his death.

Harry Stanley was shot by police while carrying a wooden table leg through Hackney.

The police claimed that they thought Stanley was armed.

The family is continuing its fight for justice.



Shop workers

BIRMINGHAM'S NEW multimillion pound Bullring shopping centre opened last month with massive publicity.

But it's a 21st century building under 19th century management.

A shop worker told me about working there:

"At the induction day we were told that we cannot discuss our wages, and that we would be sacked if we did. Shift changes happen at less than 24

hours notice and we're told of them by text messaging.

"We have five managers for just over 20 workers—they've managed to sack six workers in the first two weeks!"

"They have told us that we will be on a 'hall of shame' if we don't make enough effort over our appearance.

"I'm going to join Usdaw and encourage others to do the same."

ANDY NORTH

Bin workers

REFUSE WORKERS in Edinburgh voted last week to reject an offer from the council to end their long-running dispute over pay.

They were offered a one-off payment of £1,000 each to end their unofficial work to rule.

A refuse worker from one of the depots said, "We are determined to stick this out. We're not greedy—we just want a fair deal."

obituary

Terry Jenkins

SOCIALISTS IN Cardiff were saddened to hear of the tragic death of Terry Jenkins. Terry, who had moved to St Dogmaels, Cardigan, some months ago, was a well known socialist in Cardiff.

After joining the Young Communist League he joined the International Socialists in the 1970s and was an active member of SWP for many years.

He dropped out of politics for a while, but later joined the Anti Nazi League and

Welsh Socialist Alliance.

He started life as a painter and decorator, went to Coleg Harlech, worked for many years in the local psychiatric hospital, and the local hostel for alcoholics. Recently he had returned to part time decorating.

He was a thoughtful, caring person who will be much missed. Our thoughts go out to his wife Lynn, brother Brynley and family.

TERESA GOSS and LAWRENCE MORCOMBE



Saturday 27 September

● Demonstration against the occupation of Iraq, assemble 12 noon, Hyde Park, London.

Monday 29 September

● Demonstration at the Labour Party conference in defence of manufacturing—rally 1pm, Meyrick Park, Bournemouth. Organised by Amicus-AEEU.

Monday 27 October

● Picket against the corporations at the Reconstructing Iraq conference, 8.30am, 1 Whitehall Place, London. Organised by Voices UK.

Wednesday 12 November-Sunday 16 November

● European Social Forum, Paris. Go to www.fse-esf.org to register and book accommodation. For details of train go to www.mobilise.org.uk

Saturday 13 December-Sunday 14 December

● The Cairo Conference—an international conference against US aggression. For details go to www.stopwar.org.uk

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

Anti-racism

Unions show they have key role in fighting BNP

TRADE UNIONS in the north east of England are at the forefront of local campaigns against the Nazi British National Party (BNP).

This was shown at the TUC Northern Region's anti-racism training day held in Sunderland last Saturday.

The Northern TUC stressed in its guide to the conference, "Trade unionists are in the unique position of being able to reach out to millions of workers, their families and friends."

"Equipped with genuine facts, information and arguments, trade unionists can take on and dispel the poison spread by racist parties such as the BNP."

Some 70 trade unionists attended from a range of unions including the TGWU, Unison, GMB, Amicus and the NUT.

Throughout the day there were workshops where people shared ideas about how to take on the BNP's arguments. One workshop included countering the myths about refugees.

One TGWU member spoke about how he tackled the claim that "immigrants take British workers' jobs".

"You have point out that things like the health service would fall apart if it wasn't for workers coming into Britain," he said.

Skills

"Then you have to say the government doesn't let asylum seekers work even though there are skills shortages."

"Some of them have to work to survive and have unscrupulous employers. They do jobs that no one in Britain would touch."

In a workshop on racism in the community NUT member Linda Carruthers explained the important role trade unionists can play.

"During the recent by-election in Walker in Newcastle the BNP stood a candidate."

"I went round with a GMB shop steward from the city works department who was

born in the area, knew people and argued with them not to vote BNP. Trade unionists are not just in workplaces, they can be rooted in local areas too."

Frank Dobson, the former cabinet minister, also spoke at the conference. He is trying to counter the threat posed by the BNP. Those at the conference applauded his commitment.

Dorothy Pearson, a TGWU member, was one of those who felt that government policies have caused the deep bitterness which the BNP is trying to capitalise on.

"Frank Dobson said there was a vacuum in politics that Labour should be filling, not the BNP. I can't see much difference between Labour and the Tories."

"I'm a lifelong Labour supporter and still in the party. But they have been blowing up children in Iraq."

Spirit

"I think the spirit of what Frank Dobson said was right. We need to draw in people in communities, but not on a party political basis. We need to get back to grassroots campaigning."

Hayley Green, a Unison member, said, "I thought it was good Frank Dobson came but we can only do so much when the Labour Party feeds the BNP propaganda."

"I speak as a Labour Party member. We need to do campaigning work against the BNP and also the government's policies that are not helping us."

Kevin Rowan, secretary of the Northern TUC, added, "Our members have done good campaign work around the elections against the BNP."

"We demand the same level of courage and leadership from our politicians and I'm not convinced the government is doing that."

Health worker and Unison convenor Claire Williams, said, "Trade unions have been working with local people around election campaigns. But we need a longer term

Oldham



ACTIVISTS IN Oldham had a successful day of meetings and discussion over asylum rights, women's issues and

defence against racism last weekend. Over 20 people turned up and it was agreed that we organise monthly

events to bring together local asylum seekers and supporters and host a big music and food event in November.

Southwark

AROUND 50 people came to a meeting in Camberwell in south London to launch a campaign to defend asylum seekers on Thursday of last week.

They came together to oppose Section 55 of the Asylum and Immigration Act introduced by the government earlier this year.

Asylum seekers who fail to make an application for asylum "as soon as reasonably practicable" once they enter the UK will be refused basic support. This has led to many people sleeping on the streets of Brixton without food or shelter.

PAULINE NANDOO Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers ■ For more information phone 07949 321 349 or e-mail kelly.packer@virgin.net

HELEN SHOOTER

Alex Owolade

UNISON UNION shop steward Alex Owolade won a unanimous verdict against Lambeth council in south London at his industrial tribunal on Wednesday of last week.

The industrial tribunal decided that Lambeth council had breached the Race Relations Act.

It also decided that the council had unfairly dismissed him in 2001 because of his union activity.

The tribunal ruled that Alex Owolade had "not only the right but the duty" to campaign against the "wide background" of discrimination in the council.

Alex said, "This decision opens the way for every black worker in Britain to stand up against racism and change for the better the working environment."

London weighting

Universities

THE LATEST round of strike action in the universities, targeting student registration week in London, kicked off at University College London (UCL) and Goldsmiths on Monday of this week.

They are fighting for improved an London weighting allowance.

Members of the Unison and AUT unions picketed the UCL main site on Monday and Tuesday, as well as a number of outlying buildings.

The Amicus-MSF union asked its members to take both days off in solidarity. Picket lines were well attended.

The response of students at UCL also lifted the strikers, with many being turned away. All of UCL's libraries were closed.

Strikes at other central

London colleges were set to follow. Lecturers in all the London pre-1992 institutions have returned strong yes votes over the summer.

"We should visit each other's picket lines when SOAS, LSE and King's come out on strike," said one of the AUT strike convenors.

"But we also need to be conscious that other workers are striking on the same issue. We need to be on strike together."

The AUT has rebalotted its members and declared a local dispute with each college employer, complicating the dispute.

But it is the success of the strike action and morale of union members on the picket line which will determine how the campaign goes from here.

SEAN WALLIS

Councils

THOUSANDS OF workers employed by London councils have backed more strikes to win an increase in the London weighting allowance.

Members of the Unison union in town halls, manual depots and schools across the capital voted by 80.7 percent for more strikes in a consultative ballot.

Existing ballots allowed union leaders to call more action but they foisted the new ballot upon members anyway.

Unison members voted by 14,463 to 3,455 for strikes to win an increase to £4,000 in the London weighting allowance to cover the extra costs of living and working in the capital.

The dispute has been going on for 18 months. It has seen repeated one-day London-wide strikes of council workers, as well as selective action by workers in town halls, depots and schools.

Earlier strikes saw members of the TGWU and GMB unions out alongside Unison. Leaders of those unions have now ditched the fight. Unison's members are determined to fight on.

"This latest vote saw a bigger turnout, and more people voting for strikes than our last ballot," London Region Unison publicity officer Rahul Patel told Socialist Worker.

"Our national industrial action committee was to discuss on Tuesday a proposal for a one-day London-wide strike on Thursday 16 October, coupled with a London-wide demonstration."

"They will also be discussing a plan for more selective action by members in schools starting the same day."

"This vote has given the union a clear mandate to fight to win the claim for £4,000 London weighting. People want to win."

Socialist Worker Appeal

THANKS FOR all your donations to the paper. These are just some of the people who have contributed so far:

George Arthur, Fran Postlethwaite, Jenny Austin, Louise Rathbone, Thea Brown, James Reekie, Shelagh Wetherley, Angela Bowling, Teresa Elligott, Charissa De Zeeuw, David Weltman, Bernard Herzberg, Richard Rose, Ben Curtis, John Cranwell, Bill O'Dowd, Lynda Aitken, Peter Hughes, Martin Sear, Susan Arguile, Peter Leech, Alum Morinan, Matthew Salisbury, Mubin Haq, Pat Lavery, Claire Wormald, Alistair Macphie, Keith Boyd, Phil Marfleet, Paul Murphy, Ken Muller, Zoya Economou, Caroline Conway, Yvonne Smith, James Smith, Colin Crane, Arthur Good, Donald Casson, Kevin Stannard, Michael Weatherley, John Davies, Sam Kirk, James Dean, Lesley Hyman, Jon Olley, Mick Dear, Simon Furze, Carol Ives, Jaqueline Burford, Sue Bond, Marion Doherty, Barbara Cookson, Jane Calveley, Mike Dance, Alan Watts, Janet Evans, Helen Rogers, Matt Staples, Richard Buckwell, Mark Marriott, Greg Peakin, Pat Keith, Karen Mee, Trevor Goodfield, Ian Wallace, David Fisher, Dennis Martin, Glyn Oliver, Ian Hogg, Gaynor Barrett, Clare Williams, Helen Towers,

Geoff Abbott, Christine Carruthers, John Charlton, Jacqueline Kent, Nigel Coward, Kenneth Whitwell.

Join the Socialist Worker Appeal cycle ride round Lea Valley, London, on Sunday 26 October

I would like to take part in the Socialist Worker cycle ride and enclose a cheque for £5 payable to Socialist Worker Appeal.

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Post to:

Socialist Worker Appeal, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

For more information or to register phone 020 7538 2707

Manchester

AROUND 40 people from across the Manchester area met on Thursday of last week to discuss a response to the recent gains made by the BNP in local elections.

The meeting was called by a group of people who have been working together on anti-racist and anti-Nazi activities over the last 18 months.

The meeting attracted a broad spectrum of individuals representing a number of trade unions, political parties, youth and other organisations. They were united in their enthusiasm for a collective response to the BNP.

A number of key issues were raised and there was widespread agreement on strategies for the future.

It was agreed that the government's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees has helped to make racist views more acceptable and that this must be countered at all turns.

The meeting agreed that a leaflet exposing the true nature

of the racist BNP should be prepared and disseminated as widely and as soon as possible.

There was a call for a network of people willing to work with the media. They should make a concerted effort to counter racist views through a campaign of letter writing to the local press.

It was also agreed that there would be a launch of Manchester Against Racism some time in November, that a rally should be held at the town hall and that major national and local speakers should be invited.

Those present spoke of the meeting as a breakthrough of anti-racist campaigning in the area.

The positive contributions and the enthusiasm to work together gave those who attended a real boost.

There is a further meeting of Manchester Against Racism planned for 2 October to plan future events.

KAREN EVANS

Lecturers

Reject this deal

DELEGATES representing members of the Natfhe lecturers' union in further education (FE) colleges voted to reject an offer on pay and conditions at a meeting last weekend.

Over the summer Natfhe's FE college negotiators and the national executive committee narrowly agreed to ballot members and recommend a deal with the employers. This was after a campaign which included several days of strike action.

Opposition grew across colleges once the details of the proposed deal were spelled out.

The vote last weekend means the ballot, which starts next week, will carry a recommendation to reject the offer.

The offer is for a basic increase of 3 percent per year for two years and a new pay scale that will mean additional increases for some lecturers.

There are no guarantees of automatic progress through the scale.

The deal goes nowhere near achieving parity with school teachers, which was the main slogan of our campaign. The average pay gap is now around 15 percent.

The deal risks enshrining performance-related pay. It doesn't address London lecturers' claims for increased London weighting.

Most delegates at last weekend's conference rejected the claims that throwing out the deal would mean the end of national pay bargaining.

This was despite speeches from general secretary Paul Mackney, the vice-president and other national figures urging acceptance.

Some 40 percent of colleges have yet to fully implement the

last pay deal.

The leadership claimed that Natfhe would mount a "vigorous campaign" to ensure full implementation of the deal. Delegates were sceptical because they had seen the head of steam built up through strike action last year allowed to seep away.

Natfhe Rank and File, the left opposition group, needs to ensure that every member gets the real story on the latest pay offer.

Regions that oppose the deal need to circulate the truth about the offer to all their branches and to other regions, encouraging all branches to meet.

HOWARD MILES

■ The secretary of Natfhe Rank and File can be contacted at JohnMurphy@longtonroad.freeserve.co.uk

Socialist Worker

Bitter battle heats up as 400 walk out

by IAN McKENDRICK in Oxford

Postal workers start fightback

by CHARLIE KIMBER

POSTAL WORKERS are in a bitter struggle with their bosses which will affect the confidence of workers and managers right across Britain.

Crucial strikes are scheduled for next week. Several key mail centres were on the verge of unofficial strikes on Tuesday.

Royal Mail bosses have launched a ferocious assault designed to smash one of Britain's best-organised unions. They want to humiliate workers and make them jump to every command.

Allan Leighton and Adam Crozier, the top bosses, seized on last week's pay ballot—when workers voted against strikes—to make outrageous attacks.

But there is strong resistance, driven by pressure from the rank and file. Some 20,000 workers in London and surrounding areas will strike next Wednesday, during the Labour Party conference.

They voted for strikes by big majorities in a separate ballot to the national one over national pay.

In Royal Mail the vote was 11,417 to 4,306. Workers in Parcelforce, Counters, Quadrant (canteen), Logistics (drivers) and Romec (engineers) also voted for strikes.

The immediate cause of the

strike is to win £4,000 London weighting. Workers are fed up with a London weighting which can be as little as a third of what the police get.

They are fed up with being forced to work 48, 50 or even more hours a week just to get halfway towards a living wage in the capital.

But the strike has much greater importance than that. It is a chance for the union to regather its strength.

The good news that London is hitting back comes in the wake of a series of unofficial strikes centred on Oxford. After the pay ballot result management arrogantly told Oxford workers, "Your legs will be whipped from under you."

Oxford later struck and management then moved their mail to offices including Exeter, Swindon, Gloucester and Bristol.

As Socialist Worker went to press no office had agreed to sort the mail and tension was high. Either management had to back off or risk triggering a much wider dispute.

The union's future is on the line. It has to throw its entire weight behind every sign of resistance.

The rank and file is doing its best to save the union after the pay ballot setback.

No doubt management, and perhaps some inside the union leadership, regard Oxford and London as the real members of the "awkward squad". But the truth is that it is precisely the spirit of Oxford and London which is needed now.

Why did postal workers vote against strikes? See page 9



Oxford postal workers are in the front line of defending the union

Picture: Ian McKendrick

ON FRIDAY of last week over 400 postal workers in Oxford's mail centre walked out unofficially on strike.

An Oxford CWU union rep told Socialist Worker, "Union headquarters sent out an excellent circular detailing the attacks from the top of Royal Mail. Our reps wanted to distribute it to the members."

"Management stepped in and tried to stop them. That was bad enough in itself, but I think many people felt it was a foretaste of what was to come if they break union organisation and get a whip hand over us."

"Mail centre workers walked out. It was a very important statement of the strength that the union still has."

The next morning workers at the Headington delivery office also came out in a tremendous show of solidarity.

At a mass meeting on Sunday Oxford workers voted narrowly to return to work. But the next morning management carried out new provocations.

They approached other offices such as Swindon, Gloucester, Reading, Southampton and Plymouth to handle Oxford mail. Reps believed this was preparation for strikes.

Extra managers were drafted into Headington and delivery arrangements altered without agreement.

Bullying

As tension grew, news came in that postal workers in Reading had walked out for 40 minutes.

Then at 2.30pm management told workers at Oxford mail centre that they were going to impose changes to a whole range of disputed issues. They also announced all overtime was cancelled and there would be new leave regulations.

The bullying tone meant that even some managers at the meeting were shaking their heads.

A driver was then told to take mail to Swindon, off his normal delivery route. He refused and was sacked on the spot.

He was told the police would be called and he would be charged with theft if he tried to move his van. A second driver was suspended and two more drivers were threatened with suspension.

At about 4pm the vast majority of the workforce walked out. An acting manager was ordered back into uniform for supporting the walkout.

Workers then voted to return to work if management went through normal procedures over the sacking. This was hurled back in their faces as managers announced all union facility time was withdrawn for one month.

Workers voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike—which quickly spread to East Oxford, Kidlington and the Royal Mail Centre. Other delivery offices were expected to come out on Wednesday.

Bosses want to ride roughshod over the CWU union

MANAGERS summoned key union leaders to a meeting and told them "the world has changed", almost immediately after the pay ballot result was announced last week.

They presented the union with a final agreement on pay and major changes to

conditions and gave the union an ultimatum that they had to sign the deal there and then.

They informed the union reps that there would be no more negotiations at national level and that not a single word of the agreement could be

changed.

They then told the union that if it put into action the vote in London "the world would change again".

They added that there would not be a penny extra to settle the London weighting claim.

Finally the managers said

that in the next two weeks they would be producing detailed proposals for a new industrial relations structure covering every aspect of the business.

This entire meeting lasted ten minutes.

Dave Ward, the union's deputy general secretary,

says, "It is the executive's unanimous view that Royal Mail now see the ballot result as giving them the green light to impose change totally on their terms, effectively derecognising the union unless we accept everything they demand."

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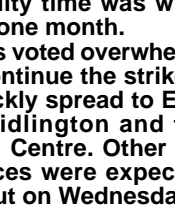
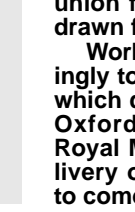
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